THE NEW ILLUSTRATED HISTORY of the World

The Middle Ages · 1050 - 1380

THE WORLD OF THE MIDDLE AGES

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Introduction

By WALTER ULLMANN

This volume deals with the most relevant and significant manifestations of the central medieval period. It is the period in which the ancient Greco-Roman inheritance had come to full fruition and in which also the amalgamation with the Germanic foundations of society had taken place. This central medieval period witnessed therefore the full fusion of disparate historical and ideological strains and, precisely by virtue of this, gave birth to a number of features which not only coloured the complexion of the age itself, but also, and perhaps more important, laid the foundations of what was to become the modern period, at least as far as Europe is concerned.

The volume spans the age between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries and though the character of the age was certainly more static than our own, there were nevertheless far more changes than is commonly assumed, both in the structure of society and above all in the ideas which sustained it. Moreover, it would be erroneous to assume that because of its undeniably static character medieval society did not expand, both horizontally, that is, externally and in width, and vertically, that is, internally and in depth.

What gave medieval society in these centuries its particular physiognomy was the virtually undisputed and uncontested sway of certain basic tenets of Christianity. The consequence of this was the great power which the papacy wielded from the time of Gregory VII in the late eleventh century and which reached its dizzy heights in the pontificate of Innocent III (1198–1216). From then on the papacy slowly but quite perceptibly declined in authority, standing and prestige: the conciliar movement which was a by-product of the Great Schism in the fourteenth century, reversed the position and function of the pope by subjecting him to the power of a general council. The pope, hitherto an uncontrolled and uncontrollable monarch, was now subjected to the supervision of the council which acted as a representative organ of the whole of Christendom.

Similarly nurtured by an application of Christian principles was secular medieval rulership in the shape of 'The king by the grace of God'—the theocratic ruler—who derived his power from divinity through the administration of unction. This kind of rulership precluded the people from conferring any power on the king: thus what the people had not given, they could not modify, still less take away. The essential feature in both the institutions of the papacy and kingship was the working of the monarchic principle: in each instance the individuals were subjects of the monarch. The great change which occurred in the thirteenth century and of which we are largely the beneficiaries, was that the status of the individual as a subject was turned into that of a citizen fully partaking, through representative institutions, in the government of the State. This so-called ascending theme of government was instrumental in the diminution of the power of the popes as well as of that of the theocratic kings. In England this process was greatly facilitated, if indeed not prepared, by the predominance of feudal kingship, which effectively tempered the rigidity of theocratic kingship and which was to a large extent responsible for the constitutional development, for the entrenchment of the common law and of Parliament as a representative organ.

In the period covered by this volume Europe was no longer a mere geographical term, but overwhelmingly an ideological notion: the unity of the Christian faith, underpinned as it was by the law of the Church, was largely responsible for bridging biological, linguistic and racial differences and for the emergence of a European commonwealth from the Orkney Islands to Sicily, from Sweden, the Prussian and Polish marshes to Castille, and Aragon in the Iberian peninsula. This commonwealth was not conceived as an economic unit. Its sustaining factors were the fraternal as well as filial bonds forged by the ideological amalgamation of the elements of originally Roman-Christian-Germanic paternity which produced common interests, aspirations and aims. The inner core of this European community in the high middle ages was religious and its structural organisation overwhelmingly ecclesiastical. Hence this same period witnessed the split with Constantinople, because its religious and ecclesiastical principles did not accord with those of the West, with the consequence that the whole eastern empire ruled from Constantinople was no longer regarded as European. The contours of the East-West tensions, of which we are the heirs, can clearly be discerned on the medieval horizon. Europe was what corresponded to the

Roman-Christian-Germanic assumptions—Constantinople and its empire were Greek and therefore outside the European orbit.

The crusades assume their special significance within the precincts of this East-West tension. They began shortly after the formal breach with Constantinople (1054) and ceased to make much appeal by the late thirteenth century. They were the first large-scale mass movements which Europe witnessed. Military in conception, religious in aim, aggressive, adventurous and romantic in character and wasteful of man-power, they certainly were aimed at wresting from the Muslims the holy places in Palestine. They had also as a not unwelcome by-product the conquest of Constantinople, which symbolised the militarily achieved subjection of the eastern empire to Latin-western domination. That the direction and overall supervision was in the hands of the papacy, is comprehensible, though the execution lay entirely in the hands of the western emperors and kings. Nevertheless, the crusades also had undoubtedly beneficial effects: they widened the intellectual horizon of their participants and helped to break down the self-imposed western isolation by familiarising the crusaders with the riches of the East; they also put a new vigour into trade and commerce. Despite the wastage in blood, effort and good will, the crusades stimulated the crusading warrior and his leaders to look beyond their narrow parochial confines.

Within this central period there was progress in virtually all departments of public, social and economic life. New techniques were acquired both in agriculture and domestic industry and in the production of the necessary implements. Missionary activity was given a new impetus, when the north-eastern regions of Europe were converted and the missions penetrated as far as central Asia in the thirteenth century. New lands were opened up by novel methods of cultivation and thus made arable. The fairs and markets in western Europe became regular places for the exchange of goods. An orderly banking system emerged. The communal movement derived great profit from an elaborate system of taxes and tolls. New industries sprang up whilst old ones were developed.

In the course of the twelfth century intellectual advances made great strides forward. It was the time when some of the monastic and cathedral schools reached their peak and when the universities came into being. Initially specialising in either law or philosophy and theology, they soon had to widen their syllabuses. In course of time the demand arose for the extension of regular curricula, and by the fourteenth century Greek, Arabic and Hebrew were included in university studies as well as medicine and related subjects. The proliferation of universities in all countries, from eastern Poland to Portugal, from Scotland to Hungary, would sufficiently indicate that they were the response to educational and social needs. And the very institution of a university was a medieval invention: there was no such thing in antiquity and there was no model on which the medieval university could have drawn.

This was also the age in which a great many heretical sects—heretical by the standards of the time—flourished. Means were devised to combat them, partly by persuasion through the efforts of the newly founded itinerant mendicant orders (chiefly Dominicans and Franciscans) and partly by the repressive measures of inquisitorial proceedings and tribunals, the execution of their sentence having been imposed on the secular power. Throughout the thirteenth century there were incontrovertible symptoms that the traditional order of things no longer satisfied contemporaries. The heretical movements were but one sign.

What the observer witnesses in the thirteenth century is a broadening of human perception, knowledge and fields of enquiry which resulted in a veritable intellectual revolution, notably through the absorption of the ideas of Aristotle. He opened up a new world, the physical world, in which hitherto little interest had been evinced. It was in the thirteenth century that the very term of 'natural sciences' came to be coined, and well-conducted experiments as proper means of enquiry made their first appearance. Man himself and his nature became for the first time an object of investigation. Man was shown to be capable not only of conquering nature (a process that has not yet come to an end), but also of managing and manipulating his own affairs in public, that is, of governing himself and through appropriate representative organs, his own community, the State. The thirteenth century might well be seen to mark the great divide between the medieval and modern world. It was the century which precisely by making man's humanity a central topic of study, gave rise to naturalism and humanism in all their multifarious and fruitful manifestations, in scholarship, in the arts, in poetry, in vernacular products, and so on. Above all, the concept of the institution of the State was born. Observation, experimentation, critical approach and the individual's self-reliance began to replace the authoritative pronouncement by superior authority, with consequences which are still not fully appreciated. Man had been liberated from the tutelage in which he had been kept for so long: as a citizen he elected the government which remained responsible to him. Man and his State had become sovereign. This is one of the many bequests of the middle ages of which the decisive and formative influence on our own world has not yet found adequate recognition.


ІѠЕИ · ИСКОУШАЖЩЕЕГО · ПРОСИ
ШАЖЗНАМЕНИЯСЪНЕБЕСЕПОКАЗАТИ
НАЛЪ


ѠІЕГИПТЯНЯПРИЗВАХЪСНАМЛЕЕГО
ОГДАЙРОДЪКИДЪКЪЯКОПОРЖГА

The frontiers of Christendom

The bitter struggle for the leadership of Christendom; missionaries and merchants open up the East; the growing power of Islam; Venice clings grimly to its empire; Germany colonises the lands to the east; Poles and Czechs fight for independence

These pictures are taken from the early thirteenth-century Bulgarian Bible.
Above left: the feeding of the five thousand.
Left: the flight into Egypt.
Above: the slaughter of the innocents in the presence of King Herod, who can be seen seated on a throne on the right of the picture. (British Museum.)

Christendom was an ideological concept: it was the community that acknowledged as its head the pope, who was held to be the direct successor of St Peter. It had been in the making since the break-up of the Roman Empire in the fifth century. The pope thus also became the guardian of the Roman heritage. It was his mission to recover the provinces lost to the German tribes who had broken through the frontiers of the Roman Empire. His weapon was not to be the sword, but the Bible.

The making of Christendom was essentially the extension of papal authority among these Germanic peoples, but its characteristic civilisation and society was very much a fusion of its Germanic and its Roman inheritance. The German contribution was more obviously marked in northern Europe, where Roman civilisation had been only a thin veneer. The Germans were able to impose their own language, customs and laws, while in Mediterranean Europe the Roman legacy remained all important. The contrast between northern and southern Europe is one of the most striking features of the medieval world.

The moulding of Christendom was interrupted by the Hungarian, Viking and Muslim invasions in the ninth and tenth centuries. These were beaten off, and the Vikings and Hungarians were converted to Christianity. The Muslims of Spain were driven back by the Christians from the mountains of Galicia and the foothills of the Pyrenees to beyond the rivers Tagus and Ebro. The islands of Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily were also recovered from the Muslims. It was a period of rapid development in almost every field, from agriculture to learning. The feudal system, which owed something to both Roman and German heritages, emerged. The papacy began to make its authority felt in all parts of Christendom; by the turn of the twelfth century it supervised almost every aspect of Christian life. Christendom had perhaps reached its greatest degree of unification.

The aim of this chapter will be to trace Christendom's shifting frontiers in the last centuries of the middle ages. The forces that determined its early expansion were largely

ideological. These forces weakened, however, and the new lands brought within the orbit of Christendom were retained within a European framework only where economic and political ties were sufficiently strong.

Western attitudes to Byzantium and Islam

The expansion of Christendom took place along two main fronts: in the North into central and eastern Europe; and in the South into Spain and the eastern Mediterranean. It was directed very largely against the Muslims and the Byzantines. The Christian attitude towards the Muslims was fairly straightforward: they were enemies of Christendom and it was essential that the Holy Places should be rescued from them. This does not mean that in the lands conquered from Islam it was impossible for Christian and Muslim to live together in harmony. In Spain and Sicily tolerance prevailed and the more advanced Muslim civilisation was absorbed by the Christians.

Much more complicated was the attitude of the West towards the Byzantine Empire, which was the direct descendant of the Roman Empire and formed part of the Christian world; its emperors claimed the right of representing the whole Christian world, which the popes asserted was their own. The struggle between Byzantium and the West was so bitter because it was a struggle for the leadership of Christendom.

In the eleventh century, the balance between western Europe and the Byzantine Empire changed radically. In 1071 the Byzantines lost Bari, their last stronghold in southern Italy, to the Normans. As a result the papacy recovered ecclesiastical jurisdiction over southern Italy, which had long been disputed with the Byzantine patriarch. So bitter was this quarrel that in 1054 the papal legate placed the Byzantine patriarch in schism.

In 1071 the Byzantines also lost virtually all Asia Minor after their defeat at Mantzikiert by the Seljuk Turks. The Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus (1081–1118) appealed for western aid. This was taken up by Pope Urban II, who in 1095 called for a crusade to rescue eastern Christendom from the menace of the Turks. His motives were many-sided; but, above all, he seized the opportunity to assert papal primacy by assuming the protectorship of the Holy Places, a role which the Byzantine emperor was no longer in a position to carry out. The First Crusade was brilliantly successful—the Holy Places were recovered—but far from improving relations between Byzantium and the West, it made them worse. The split between Rome and Constantinople was not resolved, and the Normans, who had conquered Sicily from the Muslims and had set up the principality of Antioch in northern Syria, turned their energies against the Byzantine Empire itself.

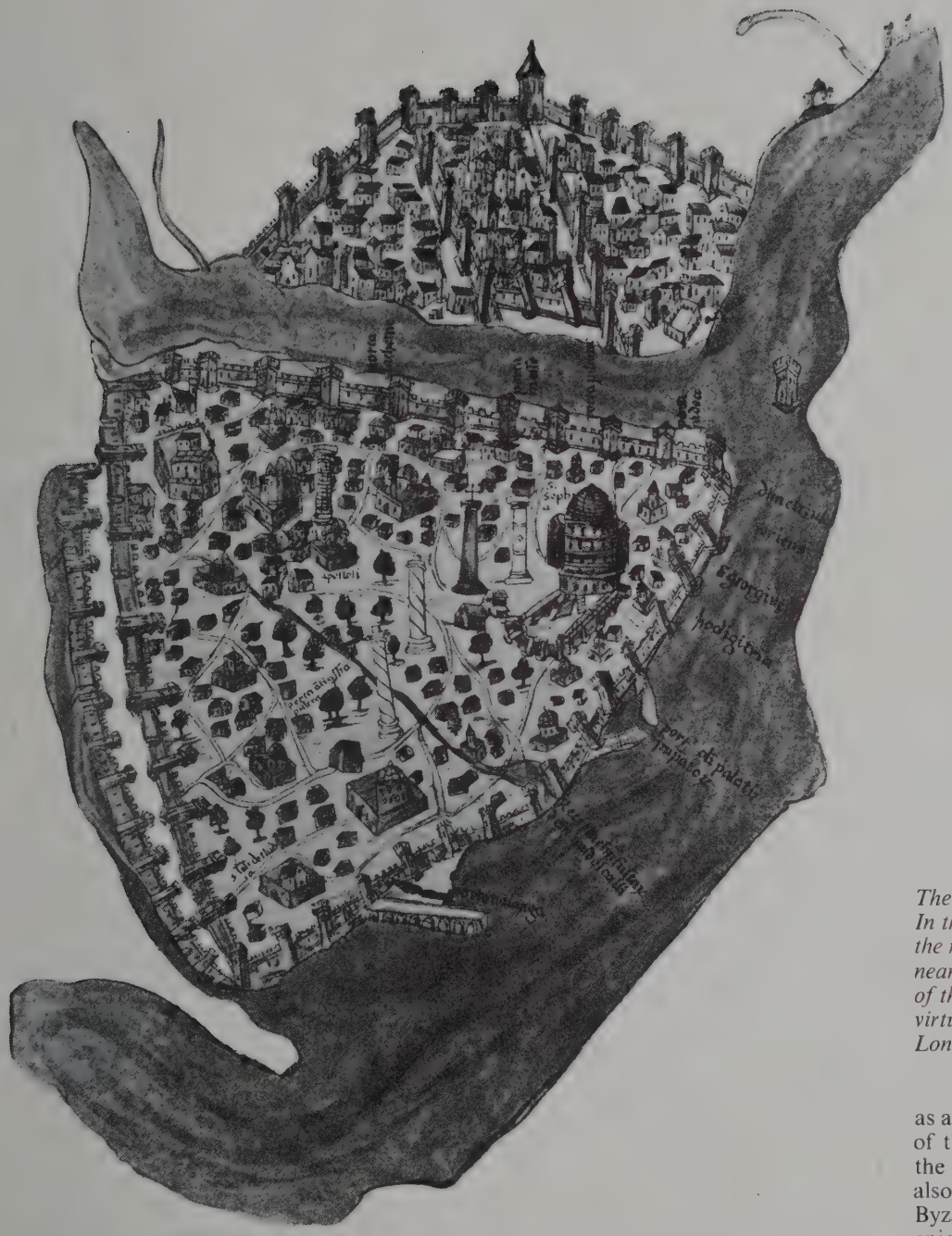
There was also rivalry between the papacy and Byzantium in central Europe and the Balkans. The prize was the domination of the Slav peoples. The Slavs of Russia and the Balkans received their Christianity from Constantinople and fell within the Byzantine orbit, while those of central Europe were converted from Rome. The success of Catholic missionaries among the Slavs owed a great deal to the backing they received from the German emperors. Christianity was used as a tool for extending imperial authority among the Slavs. By the end of the twelfth century Bohemia and Pomerania formed part of the Empire and there were also strong imperial claims to overlordship over Poland.

The German emperors were conscious of a potential threat from the emperors of Byzantium, whose claims to the imperial dignity were so much better than theirs. Under Manuel I Comnenus (1143–1180), Hungary was drawn into the Byzantine orbit by a marriage alliance, and in 1147 even the ruler of Bohemia became Manuel's vassal. The German Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–1190) began to dream of destroying his Byzantine rival by conquering Constantinople, a dream he handed on to his son Henry VI (1190–1197). Henry married Constanza, heiress to the Norman kingdom of Sicily. In this way imperial aspirations and Norman ambitions were united. Preparations were made for an expedition against Constantinople; but before they were completed, Henry had died.

The economic background to western expansion

Western expansion was not determined simply by ecclesiastical and political factors. By the twelfth century its character was beginning to change. In Germany it was becoming a colonising movement. The German border lands began to be settled by peasants recruited for the most part from Flanders and Westphalia, which were both areas of comparatively dense population. These settlers were attracted by the opportunities and the greater freedom offered by

Below: Constantinople about 1340. *It was founded in* A.D. 330 *by the emperor Constantine after whom it was named and was sacked by the army of the Fourth Crusade in* 1204. *It was recaptured by the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII in* 1261. *(Mansell Collection, London.)*



The walled city of Constantinople in 1422. *In the middle ages it was considered to be the most splendid capital in Europe, with nearly a million inhabitants, but by the time of the Turkish invasion in* 1453 *it was virtually depopulated. (Mansell Collection, London.)*

life in the new lands. A similar movement of peasants can be seen in Spain, where the Christian rulers encouraged immigration from France, while a steady trickle of peasants left southern France to help in the colonisation of the crusader states. Conquests in Spain, Sicily and Syria also helped to satisfy the land-hunger of the French nobility.

This colonising movement was made possible by the work of Italian and German merchants. In the course of the twelfth century the former came to dominate the trade of the Mediterranean and the latter that of the Baltic. Merchants from the cities of western Germany ousted the Scandinavians from control of the great trade route that led from Flanders to Novgorod in northern Russia; they possessed a more efficient type of cargo ship, the cog, but their success was mainly due to their establishment of cities along the route to Novgorod. The most important in the twelfth century were Lübeck and Visby on the island of Gotland. Coinage of the period shows the success of western penetration of northern Russia; Byzantine coinage was giving way to western European coinage.

In the Mediterranean the achievements of Italian merchants were even more spectacular. By the turn of the eleventh century the fleets of Pisa and Genoa had driven the Muslims out of the western Mediterranean and had compelled the Muslim cities of North Africa to grant them trading privileges. They assisted in the First Crusade and as a reward were given quarters in the cities of the crusader states and exempted from the payment of customs duties. They were also able to win trading concessions in the Byzantine Empire, but not as wide as those enjoyed by Venice, which had never completely severed its political connections with Byzantium. In 1082 the Venetians obtained, in return for an alliance against the Normans, the right to trade throughout almost the whole of the Byzantine Empire free of customs duties. This treaty assured the Venetians control not only of much foreign trade at Constantinople, but also of a large part of the internal trade of Byzantium.

The Fourth Crusade and its aftermath

The conquest of Constantinople in 1204 by the Venetians and the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade was the logical conclusion of the rivalry between Byzantium and the West. The closer contacts that developed in the

twelfth century only intensified the already existing hostility. The Byzantines hated the westerners for their rough, barbaric and overbearing ways and also, not without reason, they feared them as conquerors. The westerners, meanwhile, despised the Byzantines, whom they thought effete and treacherous, and they considered them upstarts and usurpers of the Roman Empire; they were intensely suspicious of the apparently amicable relations that Byzantium maintained with the Muslim states of the Middle East. It was believed that the crusaders had been betrayed by the Byzantines. For the Venetians the conquest of Constantinople was the outcome of the dominant role they had won in the commerce of the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine emperors of the twelfth century were only too well aware of the dangers that this held in store for their state. They tried to limit Venetian privileges, even in 1171 imprisoning all Venetians resident in the Empire and confiscating their goods. Compensation promised to the Venetians was never paid and the position of Venetian merchants at Constantinople remained extremely uncertain. In 1198, the Venetians were threatening to replace the Byzantine Emperor, Alexius III Angelos (1195–1203) by his nephew, who was also called Alexius—a threat that was to be realised in 1203 after the crusaders' first conquest of Constantinople. The Venetians did not necessarily want to destroy the Byzantine Empire; all they wanted was a pliable ruler who would uphold their commercial privileges.

Any hopes that had been pinned on the young Alexius were soon disappointed. Alexius was in no position to carry out the promises he had made to the crusaders and the Venetians: to recognise the primacy of the papacy, to aid the crusaders against Egypt, and to give compensation to the Venetians. Popular pressure was far too

strong. He was overthrown in a palace revolution and in March 1204 the leaders of the crusade proceeded to draw up a treaty partitioning the Byzantine Empire. On the night of 12 April 1204 the crusaders stormed Constantinople; the Byzantine emperor and patriarch fled and in their place were set up a Latin emperor and a Latin patriarch.

If the conquest of Constantinople seems to be the final result of the rivalry between Byzantium and the West, the actual course of events that led up to it was haphazard. There does not seem to have been a plot against Constantinople directed by Pope Innocent III, though he hailed the conquest as the return of the Church of Constantinople to its mother, the Roman Church.

Any direction there was to the Fourth Crusade came from Enrico Dandolo, the aged doge of Venice, and it was the Venetians who profited most from the destruction of the Byzantine Empire; they took advantage of it to found a more durable empire than the Latin Empire of Constantinople.

The Venetians were mostly interested in obtaining possession of those regions and ports that had strategic and commercial value. They gave up many of the territories allotted to them by the partition treaty, while their title to their most valuable possession in the Levant, the island of Crete, was only secured in August 1204 by a separate treaty with Boniface of Montferrat, one of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade. Crete dominated the entrances to the Aegean; it was the vital link on the trade routes from western Europe both to Constantinople and to the ports of Syria.

Above: Marco Polo setting sail from Venice in 1271 *to visit the Orient. His celebrated account of his travels was almost the only source of information about the East for more than* 300 *years. (Bodleian Library, Oxford.)*

There was less method behind the conquests of the crusaders, but the Greeks were in disarray and were at first inclined to accept the rule of the new lords of Constantinople. By early 1205 the Latin Empire had possibly reached its greatest extent. It dominated not only the coasts of the Sea of Marmora, but also the European coasts of the Aegean from Thrace to the Peloponnese. It seemed that the Latin Empire might successfully replace the fallen Byzantine Empire.

In March 1205, however, the Latin Emperor Baldwin I was ambushed near Hadrianople by the Bulgarians and was never heard of again. Shortly afterwards Boniface of Montferrat was also killed in battle against the Bulgarians. The frailty of the Latin Empire was only too apparent. Baldwin's brother, Henry of Hainault, had to abandon his conquests in Asia Minor and hurry to the rescue of Constantinople. He was elected emperor soon afterwards, and his firm rule did much to disguise the weakness of his Empire. He was able to assert his authority over its more distant parts and he did his best to reconcile his Greek subjects to Latin rule.

The Fall of the Latin Empire

A serious weakness of the Latin Empire was that the conquest of western Asia Minor was never completed. There were as a result difficulties in provisioning Constantinople which became more serious as the hold of the Latins over Thrace grew weaker. Furthermore, Constantinople could hardly act as the focal point of the Latin Empire; it was too distant from its main centres of power in Greece and the Peloponnese. It was also isolated by foreign enemies. In Europe it was threatened by the Bulgarians and in Asia Minor by the Greeks, who were reorganising themselves. The Latin emperors were forced to fight on two fronts; this overtaxed their resources.

The dangers of Constantinople's position became more pronounced after Henry of Hainault's death in 1216. His successors as emperor were mostly worthless men, unable to give cohesion to the lands of the Latin Empire. The capture of Thessalonica in 1224 by the Greeks of Epirus isolated Constantinople still further. Yet the Latin Empire lingered on until 1261. That it lasted this long was due for the most part to quarrels among its opponents, the strength of the walls of Constantinople, and the protection afforded by the Venetian navy.

Even the Venetians, however, who had expected so much from Constantinople, seem to have been disappointed. By 1261 Venetian commercial interests were moving away to the crusader states. This was not only the result of chaotic conditions in Constantinople; it was also because the Black Sea trade, which had been falling off in the twelfth century, failed to revive after

1204. As a result the Latin emperors were always in financial difficulties. This was reflected in their growing military weakness. Western knights were reluctant to settle in the Latin Empire; many preferred to take service under the Greeks. All in all, the Latin Empire received far too little backing from the West. The papacy was too involved in its wars with the Staufen to devote much attention to the needs of the Latin Empire.

Any hopes that Innocent III might have entertained that the Schism between the eastern and western churches had been healed by the conquest of Constantinople were soon disappointed. The Greek people and priests were unwilling to yield to the Latin Church and ritual. Adherence to Greek Orthodoxy became the badge of resistance to the Latin conqueror. Byzantine civilisation was deeply rooted and remarkably resilient. In the Peloponnese the Villehardouins were forced to introduce Greek landowners into the feudal system they established. The system itself, in which the registers of fiefs had to be kept in Greek, owed much to Byzantine institutions. The conquerors have left behind them practically no traces of Gothic architecture. One version of the *Chronicle of the Morea,* which celebrates the deeds of the Franks in the Peloponnese, was even written in Greek.

The Greek resurgence

The failure of the Latin Empire was due to the lack of aid from the West and to its inability to adapt itself to the Levant; it was also due to the resurgence of the Greeks. The main centres of the Greek revival were in Asia Minor around the city of Nicea and in Epirus, and arose immediately after the fall of Constantinople. The founder of the Nicaean Empire, Theodore Lascaris (1205–1222), immediately set about recreating in exile the fallen Byzantine Empire. He took the most vital step in 1208, when he had a Byzantine patriarch elected at Nicaea, which thus became in a real sense the new centre of the Orthodox world. In 1219 the ruler of Serbia, who two years earlier had obtained a royal crown from the papacy, preferred to recognise the Nicaean patriarch. In return the Serbian archbishop was granted independent status. In 1235 the Bulgarians followed the Serbian example and the Bulgarian primate was raised to patriarchal rank. The Balkans were returning to the Byzantine orbit.

*Left: Rhodes (situated on the north-east shore of the island of the same name) changed hands many times during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It finally came under the rule of the Ottoman Turks (*1523*) in whose possession it was to remain for the next* 400 *years. (Mansell Collection, London.)*

The Greeks of Epirus challenged the Nicaean claim to be the true heirs of Byzantium. In 1225, after destroying the Latin kingdom of Thessalonica, the Greek despot of Epirus was proclaimed emperor; but before his ambitions against Constantinople could be realised, he was captured by the Bulgarians. An alliance between the Bulgarians and the Nicaeans also failed to take the city, but it was the starting point for the Nicaean conquest of Thrace and Macedonia. The Nicaeans could not turn their energies against Constantinople until 1259, when these conquests were finally secured. It fell two years later to a small Nicaean force which penetrated the defences of the city while the Latin garrison was absent.

Charles of Anjou and Michael Palaeologos

After the fall of the Latin Empire in 1261 the West did not completely despair of recovering Constantinople. The old Norman dreams of conquering that city were inherited by Charles of Anjou, who in 1266 won the kingdom of southern Italy and Sicily from Frederick II's bastard Manfred. Charles's plans to revive the Latin Empire received papal blessing and were called crusades. As a preliminary, Charles set about the conquest of Albania and obtained possession of the Frankish principality in the Peloponnese, which had been threatened since 1262 by the Byzantines. To buy time, the Byzantine Emperor Michael Palaeologos (1259–1282) was even willing in 1274 to negotiate a Union of Churches with the papacy. Constantinople was saved from the Angevin threat only when in 1282 the Angevins were driven from Sicily by a popular rising—the 'Sicilian Vespers'.

Decline of the crusades and loss of the crusader states

Only nine years later Acre, the last remaining Christian possession of any importance along the Syrian coast, fell to the Mamelukes of Egypt. Western expansion eastwards was coming to an end: Constantinople could not be retrieved and the crusader states were lost. Their fall was not unexpected; it had been in preparation for more than a century. In 1187 the kingdom of Jerusalem fell to Saladin. Within six years it was partially restored thanks to the efforts of the Third Crusade; the island of Cyprus was conquered, but Jerusalem was not recovered and the crusader states were little more than a ribbon stretching down the Syrian coast, scarcely more than twenty miles in breadth. Their political weakness was all too clear and their internal history was to be a sad tale of sordid disputes over an empty throne, though some efforts were made to strengthen them. In 1229 Frederick II exploited the weakness of the Muslims of Syria and Egypt to negotiate the return of Jerusalem, but the crusaders were too weak to keep it, and in 1244 it returned to the Muslims.

The crusading movement was still active in the thirteenth century. In 1218 and then under St Louis of France in 1249, crusades were mounted against Damietta in the Nile delta, while in 1270 St Louis led another crusade against Tunis. But this could not disguise the growing body of opinion that criticised the idea and usefulness of the crusade. The papacy was generalising its use: it was no longer solely directed towards the restoration of papal primacy over the eastern Church; it was also used simply to uphold papal authority. Crusades were launched against heretics and even against the papacy's political opponents. Contemporaries believed that the papacy had betrayed the crusading ideal. There was resentment at the crusading taxes and at the way indulgences were sold.

Criticism of the crusade was one of the first signs that the supremacy of the papacy would be called in question and that the idea of Christendom was being undermined. New nation states were coming into being; internal frontiers were becoming more sharply defined and expansion overseas was ending. This can be seen in Spain, where Muslim conquest virtually ceased after the mid-thirteenth century. The first half of the century, it is true, saw a considerable advance by the Christians of Spain. In 1212 a crusade organised at the command of Innocent III won a great victory over the Muslims at Las Navas. This was a prelude to the achievements of Ferdinand III of Leon (1217–1254), who in 1230 reunited the crowns of Leon and Castile. In 1236 he conquered Cordoba; in 1243 the province of Murcia fell to him, and in 1248 Seville.

Above: the ancient ruins of Old Corinth showing the Temple of Apollo (c. 550 B.C.). After the Fourth Crusade the city was conquered by Geoffroi de Villehardouin. It was later seized by the Ottoman Turks in 1458. (Mansell Collection, London.)

The Aragonese under James I (1213–1276) completed the conquest of the Balearic islands in 1235, and in 1238 they captured the city and province of Valencia. At about the same time the Portuguese drove the Muslims out of the Algarve. Only Granada remained to the Muslims. Nevertheless, the frontiers gained by 1250 were to remain static for nearly 250 years.

The Mongols and the West

The failure of the crusades led some men to wonder whether missionary work among the Muslims might not meet with greater success. Even in the twelfth century there had been those who tried to take a more rational view of Islam. William of Malmesbury, the English historian, emphasised that the Muslims regarded Muhammad not as God, but as his prophet. In 1143 another Englishman, Robert of Ketton, finished a translation of the Koran into Latin. In the thirteenth century members of the Franciscan and Dominican orders actually began the task of preaching to the Muslims. Ramon of Pennafort, a Spanish Dominican, worked during the period 1240–1275 for the conversion of Muslims in Spain and North Africa. Another Dominican, William of Tripoli, emphasised to Pope Gregory X (1271–1276) the connection between Christianity and Islam, and advocated the peaceful conver-

sion of the Muslims. By the middle of the thirteenth century, however, this new missionary enthusiasm had found a much more promising field than the stubborn Muslims.

The creation of the Mongol Empire by Genghis Khan in the early thirteenth century was to open up practically the whole of the Far East to western missionaries and traders. When he died in 1227 his dominions reached from the Pacific to the Caspian and the Indian Ocean. They were split up among his sons, but they continued as a loose confederation and further conquests were made. Persia, the Caucasus, and southern Russia were all incorporated in the Mongol Empire. The ferocity of the Mongols may not have seemed favourable for western missionary activity. Many of the tribes that formed the Mongol confederation were, however, Nestorian Christians—this was to give rise to the legend of Prester John—while the western Mongols were interested in the West because they saw there potential allies against their main enemies, the Mamelukes of Egypt.

In 1245 a Franciscan, John of Pian de Carpini, was sent by the papacy on a mission to the Mongols. This was the beginning of the exchange of numerous embassies and missions between the Mongols and the West. For almost a century western missionaries were able to work in the Far East. Latin missionaries established themselves in India on the Malabar coast, while others reached China, where in the early fourteenth century John of Monte Corvino became Bishop of Peking.

The work of these missionaries helped to prepare the way for western merchants. Between 1260 and 1269 Marco Polo's father and uncle reached the court of Peking. They returned to the West and in 1271 began the return journey to China, taking Marco Polo with them. He was to remain in the service of the Great Khan from 1275, when he arrived, until his departure in 1292. He recounts his life in fascinating detail in his book, *Il Milione*. Other western merchants have left much less trace of their activities in the Far East. In China the Franciscans established a factory for western merchants at Zaiton, opposite Formosa, which in the estimation of contemporary travellers was the greatest port in the world. By 1315 agents of the Genoese bank of Vivaldi had set up business in India in the ports of Gujerat and Malabar.

Undoubtedly the most important market for westerners was Tabriz in northern Persia. It lay at the centre of caravan routes leading from China across Central Asia and from India by way of the Persian Gulf. It was in close contact both with the Black Sea through Trebizond and with the Mediterranean through the ports of the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia. The Genoese established themselves at Tabriz soon after the middle of the thirteenth century and by 1304 had organised themselves into a colony. They entered the service of the Mongol rulers of Persia; they manned a fleet on the Euphrates and they sailed the Caspian. The Venetians obtained the right to keep a consul at Tabriz only in 1324.

By that date the situation was becoming more unfavourable. The Mongols were being converted to Islam and were becoming more hostile to Christians. In 1339 Westerners were massacred at Almaligh, the chief city of Turkestan. In 1343 others were slaughtered by the Mongols at the port of Tana on the Sea of Azov. The route across the steppes which in the early fourteenth century had been described in the Florentine Pegolotti's handbook for merchants as 'quite safe' was now barred to western merchants. At the same time the collapse of the Mongol state in Persia virtually closed the market of Tabriz to westerners.

Mamelukes and Ottomans

The break-up of the Mongol Empire and the closing of Asia inaugurated a period of crisis for western Europe. The Mamelukes of Egypt had a stranglehold over the Red Sea trade route, which now became the main channel by which oriental spices, drugs and dye-stuffs reached the West. They were able to demand excessive tariffs. In 1375 they finally destroyed the Christian kingdom of Cilicia. This deprived Cyprus of much of its commercial value, and in 1426 the island was terribly ravaged by the Mamelukes.

In the Aegean and the Balkans the West was faced with a new enemy, the Ottoman Turks. The Ottomans formed one of the many Turkish emirates that by the early fourteenth century had destroyed Byzantine rule in western Asia Minor.

The loss of its Asiatic provinces in the early fourteenth century sealed the fate of the Byzantine Empire. It no longer had the resources to resist its enemies, let alone continue the work of restoring its former greatness. The power vacuum created by the fall of Constantinople in 1204 still remained unfilled. Neither the Venetians nor the Genoese had the power or the inclination to dominate the Levant; they were only too content to exploit the commercial opportunities that the absence of any great power presented. At one stage in the mid-fourteenth century it looked as though the Serbian ruler Stefan Dushan might succeed to the Byzantine heritage. In 1345 he had himself proclaimed 'Emperor of the Serbs and Greeks'; but his death in 1355 showed how weak the foundations of his empire were, how impossible it was to bind together the many peoples of the Balkans into a single state. For one thing, the rivalries between the patriarch of Constantinople and the Serbian and Bulgarian Churches went far too deep. Such a situation helps explain the rise of the Ottomans to power in the Balkans during the second half of the fourteenth century.

The Ottomans served as mercenaries in the civil wars that racked the Byzantine Empire in the mid-fourteenth century. In 1354 they were able to establish themselves in the Gallipoli peninsula. The conquest of Thrace followed very rapidly. The Byzantines were forced to become vassals of the Ottoman ruler Murad I (1360–1389). In 1387 Thessalonica fell to the Ottomans. Two years later they completely defeated the Serbs at Kossovo, and in 1393 Bulgaria was conquered. Ottoman authority extended in Europe from the Danube to the Aegean and the Gulf of Corinth. The areas of direct Ottoman rule were, however, rather more limited. In general they aimed at occupying strategic points; they were willing to allow local rulers a large measure of independence, as long as they remained loyal, and provided troops and an annual tribute.

The dynamism of the Ottomans sprang from their *ghazi* mission to extend Islam at the expense of the infidel. The Tatar conqueror Timur claimed that they were neglecting this mission, and in 1402 he defeated the Ottoman ruler Bayezid at Ankara—though this setback was made good by Murad II (1421–1451). The culmination of Murad's work, the conquest of Constantinople, was left to his son Mehmed the Conqueror (1451–1481), who accomplished the task in 1453.

The crusades in the later middle ages

Western Europe and the papacy were well aware of the threat posed by the Ottomans, and the papacy took more drastic measures against them than it had against the Mamelukes. The aim had been to bring the Mamelukes to their knees by economic sanctions, but this policy was flouted by western merchants and even turned out to be a lucrative source of revenue for the papacy, which sold licences for trade with Egypt. In 1365, it is true, King Peter of Cyprus mounted a crusade against Alexandria. Apart from this, however, the crusade was employed in the fourteenth century for the defence of western interests against the Turks only.

In the early part of the century the main threat came from the Turkish emirates established on the west coast of Asia Minor, who had taken to piracy on the Aegean. In 1344 the chief of these pirate towns, Smyrna, was captured by a crusading expedition. This was perhaps the most successful of the later crusades; troops had been provided by the papacy, by the King of Cyprus, by the Venetians, and by the Knights Hospitallers. In 1350 the Knights Hospitallers were given the task of garrisoning the city. After the fall of the crusader states they had retreated to Cyprus and then in 1308 found a base on the island of Rhodes. The Hospitallers provided a small permanent

force for the defence of Christendom in the Levant. From 1397 to 1404, for example, they occupied the citadel of Corinth and stood guard against Turkish invasions of the Peloponnese.

Meanwhile the Ottomans had come into conflict with the Hungarians along the lower Danube. The Hungarian King Sigismund (1387–1437) appealed to the West for a crusade against the Turks to rescue Constantinople, but this crusade was annihilated by the Ottomans in 1396 at the Battle of Nikopolis. It was the last genuinely western crusade. Others mounted against the Ottomans were mainly the concern of the Hungarians; such was the crusade of Varna in 1444, another disaster for Christian arms. The Ottoman hold on the Balkans was not to be shaken.

The union of the Churches

The emperors of Byzantium understood that the only hope of rescue from the Ottoman threat came from the West. Appeals were made to the papacy; the emperors John V (1341–1391) and Manuel II Palaiologos (1491–1425) toured the capitals of Italy and western Europe in the search of aid. The papacy demanded in return the Union of Churches. In 1369 John V agreed to work for this and in 1439 at the Council of Florence the Union was formally proclaimed. Union with Rome had some backing in Byzantium among the intellectuals, but such was the popular antipathy that its implementation was almost impossible. Negotiations over the Union of Churches at least brought to Italy numbers of Byzantine scholars, who revealed to Italian humanists the treasures of classical learning preserved by Byzantium.

Venice and the Turks

The advance of the Ottomans into the Aegean and the Balkans touched the interests of Venice more sharply than those of almost any other western power. The Venetians pursued two main objectives: they wanted to bar the Aegean to Ottoman warships and clear it of Turkish pirates; they also wanted to preserve Albania and the Dalmatian coasts from Ottoman conquest. If these fell to the Ottomans, Venice's control of the Adriatic might well be endangered. A policy of co-operation in the crusades and attempts to unite the Christian powers of the Levant against the Turks were not very successful. From the late fourteenth century Venice embarked on a deliberate policy of building up its territories both in Italy and in the Levant. Albania came under a Venetian protectorate and various ports in Greece and the Peloponnese were acquired. In 1423 Thessalonica passed under Venetian control, only to fall to the Turks seven years later. Thereafter, the Venetians were on the defensive, and tried to follow a conciliatory policy towards the Ottomans. After the fall of Constantinople Turkish pressure on the Venetians grew stronger, until in 1463 war broke out; it was to last until 1479. The Venetians clung grimly to their Empire, but at the peace treaty they were compelled to cede the island of Euboea, and they had to give up their Albanian protectorate; they were being forced out of the Aegean and their hold on the Adriatic was threatened. The West was losing control of the Mediterranean, which had been one of the foundations of its commercial supremacy.

The end of Italian commercial supremacy

Competition between western merchants became fiercer. By the end of the thirteenth century Venetian merchants were being instructed by their government to form price rings to counter Genoese competition. There was a succession of bitter commercial wars between Venice and Genoa, lasting from the mid-thirteenth century until the close of the next century. The main prize was control of Constantinople and the Black Sea trade. The Byzantines were reluctantly drawn into these wars and were stripped of Lesbos, Chios and Phocaea by the Genoese.

The Venetians and the Genoese realised that their colonial possessions were not simply valuable as trading stations, but that they also had natural riches to be exploited. In Crete and Cyprus, Venetian landowners began to plant sugar and cotton and the government encouraged the growing of dyestuffs. Wine was also exported. The Genoese worked the alum mines of Phocaea on the western coast of Asia Minor. At the same time there was a growing trade in raw materials. Corn was shipped from southern Russia and the Romanian principalities to Italy, as were the animal products of the Balkans and the Peloponnese. There was also a brisk trade in slaves from southern Russia. The great commercial centre of all this trade was the island of Chios. Thus just at the moment that western control over the Aegean was about to end, the Levant was more than ever before an economic colony of the West, providing it with raw materials and receiving in return finished goods.

More direct contacts were also made between the Mediterranean and northern Europe. At the turn of the thirteenth century the Venetians and Genoese began to pioneer the sea route to Flanders. There was even some direct trade between Flanders and Crete, which the Venetians did their best to prohibit. In the mid-fifteenth century the Italians were faced for a short while with the threat of Enlish competition.

Italian trading interests had been moving westwards over a long period. Even in the thirteenth century Pisa found it more profitable to concentrate on trade with

Tunis and Sicily, while the Genoese developed a well-balanced triangular trade between the Levant, Genoa, and Morocco. It was only natural that once conditions became unfavourable in the Levant the Italians would tend to shift their interests more and more to the western Mediterranean and northern Europe. The rise of the Ottomans contributed to this, not because they were actively hostile to western commerce, but because they were in a position to demand customs duties; they also encouraged local industries and the development of a Greek merchant marine. Both helped to undermine the old bases of western commercial supremacy, though the Levant was never completely closed to the Italians in the Mediterranean.

Expansion in northern Europe

Western expansion in the Levant had been favoured by political conditions. There were no dominant powers; this allowed the westerners to control the seas and consequently the trade of the Levant. Their commercial supremacy was jeopardised and finally destroyed by the rise to power first of the Mamelukes and then of the Ottomans.

Western expansion in northern and central Europe also took place against a background of political disintegration. The thirteenth century saw the destruction of imperial power in the struggle between Frederick II and the papacy. The emperors

no longer possessed any sufficiently strong basis of power in Germany itself, and with the removal of effective imperial authority Germany lost its cohesion, splitting up into numerous petty states. In the Slav states the power of the crown tended to be weakened by the claims of members of the ruling family, and by those of the Church and nobility. The pagans of the Baltic coast possessed only the most rudimentary organisation, while the Orthodox principalities of Russia had to bear the full brunt of the Mongol invasions. In 1240 they were brought under the authority of the Khanate of the Golden Horde and, with the exception of Novgorod, were virtually cut off from the West. In 1241 the Mongols invaded central Europe, but the threatened conquest never materialised.

The uncertainty of the situation in eastern Europe invited western expansion. The papacy hoped to convert the pagans and to bring the Orthodox of Russia under the authority of Rome. By the mid-thirteenth century it seemed on the point of achieving these aims. In 1251 the ruler of the pagan Lithuanians was baptised, and two years later the Orthodox ruler of the western Russians accepted a crown from Pope Innocent IV. But this chance of extending the frontiers of Christendom beyond the confines of Poland and Hungary came to nothing. Both rulers returned to their former persuasions; the latter because papal aid against the Mongols was not forthcoming, the former because conversion to Christianity did not save his people from their greatest enemies, the knights of the Teutonic Order.

The Teutonic knights

The Teutonic Order was founded at the end of the twelfth century for service in the Holy Land, but later settled in Prussia at the invitation of Conrad of Mazovia. This Polish duke hoped that they would protect his territories from the pagan Prussians. It was his intention that the Order should remain under his control, but he was outwitted and the knights became an independent power. From their fortresses of Culm and Thorn, built by 1232, they quickly overran Prussia. They were soon faced with a violent Prussian uprising. It was put down with the utmost savagery, but resistance was not finally crushed until 1283.

In 1237 the Order took over another military order, the Knights of the Sword, founded in 1202 to convert the pagans of Livonia, after the latter's very existence had been imperilled by a defeat at the hands of a Lithuanian tribe. The Teutonic knights quickly restored the situation in Livonia and even initiated an aggressive policy against the Russians of Novgorod. This was brought to an end in 1242 when they were defeated by the Russian prince Alexander Nevsky. Thereafter their energies were mostly taken up in a vicious war against the Lithuanians, although in 1308 the Order was able to seize Pomerelia and the city of Danzig from the clutches of the Poles. It was now approaching the height of its power, with territories that stretched along the Baltic coast from the Oder to the Narva.

The Luxemburgs in central Europe

The Teutonic knights succeeded in building up a German state along the Baltic coast. This was only part of a general spread eastwards of German political power. The imperial houses of Habsburg and Luxemburg hoped to find in the 'new lands' beyond the Elbe, a basis of power which would give substance to the imperial office. The key to their plans was Bohemia. Under its native Slav Dynasty it was the most

Lübeck in 1493. *This major port on the Baltic was ruled by a merchant aristocracy. Its prosperity had rapidly increased during the middle ages and as a result it became head of the Hanseatic League. (Mansell Collection, London.)*

advanced and powerful state in central Europe during the thirteenth century. When this dynasty died out in the early fourteenth century, the Habsburg Emperor Albert of Austria (1298–1308) used the prestige of his office to obtain Bohemia for his family. After his death, however, it fell to the new imperial house of Luxemburg; the Habsburgs had to rest content with their Austrian lands.

In the course of the fourteenth century the Luxemburg rulers of Bohemia succeeded in uniting under their rule virtually all the 'new lands' beyond the Elbe. This was mainly the work of the Emperor Charles IV (1347–1378). His ambitions then turned further east to Poland and Hungary, whose crowns were united in 1370 by King Louis of Hungary (1342–1383). Louis left no male heirs, and both the Luxemburgs and the Habsburgs coveted his inheritance. Poland was to escape their clutches, but Hungary fell in 1386 to Charles's son Sigismund, who had married one of Louis's daughters, while the Habsburg plans came to nothing. The whole Luxemburg heritage was finally united under Sigismund when he became King of Bohemia in 1419. On his death in 1437 it passed to the Habsburg Albert of Austria; but when Albert died two years later, the entire Luxemburg edifice collapsed.

German migration eastwards

The conquests of the Teutonic knights and the development of the Luxemburg state were sustained by German migration into the lands beyond the Elbe. In the first half of the thirteenth century there was a general advance of German peasant settlement from the Elbe to the Oder, and from the close of the century a second wave of German colonisation swept into Pomerania and Prussia. German settlement was on a massive scale. It has been reckoned that between 1200 and 1350 about 1,200 new villages were planted in Silesia. Rather more had been founded by the turn of the fourteenth century on the east Prussian lands of the Teutonic Order. Outside these main areas of colonisation there were other regions of more scattered German settlement, in Bohemia, southern Poland, western Hungary, and Transylvania.

Peasant migration was only one aspect of German expansion. Germans controlled the mining industry of central Europe; they opened up the gold and silver mines discovered in Bohemia and Moravia in the mid-thirteenth century and in Hungary during the next century. They also worked the saltmines around Cracow.

The Germans' success in colonising the new lands owed a great deal to the towns they founded. Before the thirteenth century there were very few German towns beyond the Elbe, although German traders had established themselves in the most important Slav centres. Later it was not uncommon for an old Slav centre to be refounded as a German city. This is what happened at Cracow in 1257. At about the same date Brno comprised an old quarter inhabited by Czechs and a new town settled by Germans and a few Walloons engaged in weaving. German towns were most thickly scattered in the areas of heavy peasant settlement between the Elbe and Oder and on the lands of the Teutonic Order, where by 1410 ninety-three new towns had been founded. There were also large numbers of German towns in areas of less dense German settlement, such as Bohemia and Poland. They were founded along trade routes and in the mining regions. They not only ensured German control of trade and mining in central Europe, but they might also open up new areas for peasant colonisation. The towns provided the new German villages with protection and with markets. In the early thirteenth century it was already becoming the practice in Silesia to found new villages around an urban centre.

The Hanseatic League

A practice which gave greater cohesion to German colonisation was that of founding the new towns according to the laws of a particular German city. Although those of Magdeburg were perhaps the most popular, the German towns founded along the Baltic coast almost all took their laws from Lübeck; they came to be known as cities of the Hansa. Among the most important were Rostock, Danzig, Riga and Reval. Together with other cities of western Germany, they formed a loose confederation to ensure control of the trade route from Flanders to Novgorod; this was the basis of their prosperity. They brought to the West the raw materials of Russia and northern Europe—furs, timber and wax. They took back in return finished goods, especially Flemish cloth. They also helped bring supplies to the German colonists and provided an outlet for their produce. By 1250 corn was being shipped from Brandenburg to England and Flanders.

Lübeck was the hub of the confederation of Hansa cities. Goods were trans-shipped there across a narrow neck of land to the Elbe, thus avoiding the long route round Denmark. Lübeck's prosperity was threatened by the Danes' ambitions in the Baltic and their control of Holstein. In 1227 it formed a coalition of Hansa cities which drove the Danes out of Holstein. This coalition was only temporary, and it was not until 1358 that the Hanseatic League was formally constituted. In 1370 the Danes were brought to their knees, but by then the high point of Hanseatic prosperity was already passed; the cities of the Hansa were going on the defensive against Dutch and English competition.

Slavs and Germans

Among the achievements of the Hanseatic towns was the integration of the Baltic lands in the economy of western Europe. The presence of German cities and merchants produced much the same result in central Europe, while the better agricultural techniques and implements brought by the German peasants improved the standard of agriculture. This may have helped to improve the lot of the Slav peasants, but they only accepted German laws and customs with great reluctance.

German colonisation also brought central Europe more firmly into the framework of western culture. This was most marked among the upper classes. Many members of the thoroughly German nobility of Brandenburg had Slav ancestors, while the Czech and Polish nobility adopted the German practice of using family titles and crests, as well as the building of castles.

The Church was a still more active agent of westernisation. Two orders of monks, one founded at Prémontré in 1119, the other at Cîteaux in 1098, were granted wide lands by the Slav princes. Gothic architecture was introduced and quickly assimilated by the Czechs; Bohemian Gothic was to be one of the glories of late medieval architecture. There also grew up in Bohemia a school of Latin religious poetry, and even the flowering of Czech literature from the mid-thirteenth century was inspired by the same currents as other western vernacular literatures. In the fourteenth century Bohemia was quickly caught up in the early Humanist movement.

Poland took longer to absorb western culture; ideas associated with the eleventh-century Gregorian reform movement were accepted only in the early thirteenth century. The spread of Gothic architecture and Latin religious poetry did not begin to spread until the fourteenth century. The Poles were much influenced by the achievements of the Czechs. Polish students flocked to the University of Prague, founded in 1348 by the emperor Charles IV. This influenced Casimir the Great of Poland, who in 1364 proceeded to establish a university at Cracow.

Slav reaction

The assimilation of western culture did not reconcile the Slavs to the Germans; if anything, it made them more conscious of their national heritage. The Slav reaction was fiercest in Bohemia, which was most open to German influences. The German domination of the economy was resented, and there were clashes between Czechs and Germans in the University of Prague, which was controlled by the German 'nation'. As a result the movement initiated by John Hus for the reform of the Bohemian Church, which was purely spiritual in origin, became

tinged with the anti-German feeling that existed among Czechs of all classes. This flared up into a national rising in 1419 when he was held responsible for Hus being condemned to death by the Council of Constance in 1415. Sigismund mounted expeditions called crusades against the Czechs, but they were all defeated. He was forced to negotiate and finally in 1434 was recognised as King of Bohemia. Bohemia returned only very briefly to German rule, however; after Albert of Austria's death in 1439 Bohemia was ruled by a Czech, George of Podebrady, first as regent for Albert's posthumous son Ladislas, and then from 1458 to 1471 as king.

The Poles were never subjected in the same way as the Czechs to German domination, but they came under its shadow. In 1343 the founder of Polish unity, Casimir the Great (1333–1370), had to renounce his claims to the Pomerelian lands seized by the Teutonic Order, and about the same time Silesia was detached from Poland by the Luxemburgs. Casimir's ambitions turned eastwards to the lands of western Russia, which were then under the rule of the pagan Lithuanians. This prepared the way for the union of the Polish and Lithuanian crowns in 1386, as a result of which the Lithuanians adopted Christianity and were brought within the sphere of western civilisation. The Lithuanian nobility proceeded to adopt the manners and traditions of the Polish aristocracy.

The Lithuanians and Poles united against their common enemy, the knights of the Teutonic Order, and at Grünwald in 1410 gained a crushing victory. Although the Order was forced on to the defensive, it took a succession of wars to bring the knights to their knees; only in 1466 were they at last obliged to give up western Prussia to the Poles.

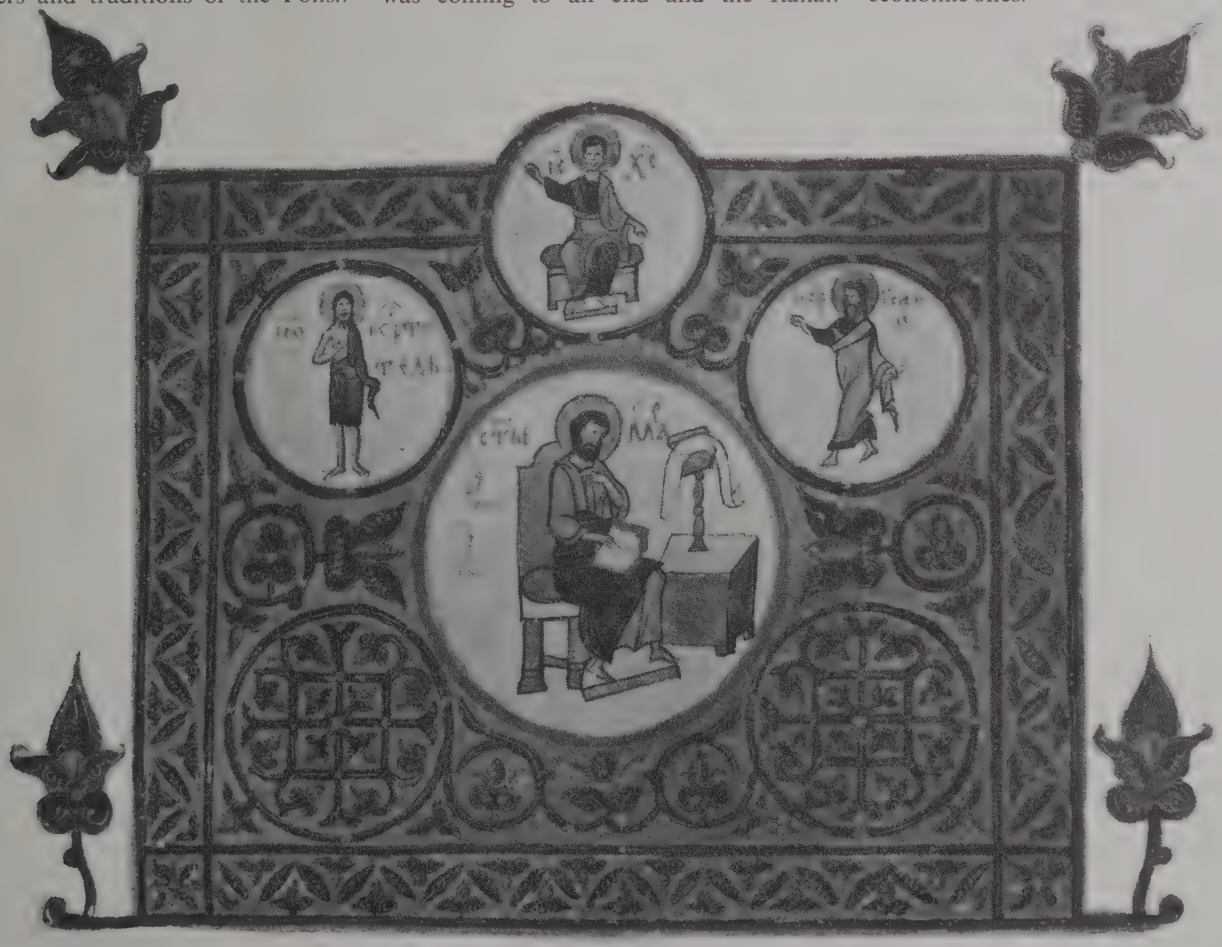
The great discoveries and renewed expansion overseas

The Polish and Czech reaction to the threat of German domination came at a time when German colonisation was ending. By the mid-fourteenth century German migration into Prussia was slowing down. No more new lands were to be Germanised and the Germans were to lose those regions, such as Livonia, where conquest had not been followed by extensive German settlement. By the fifteenth century there were reports that villages were being deserted in areas of heavy German settlement, such as Brandenburg and Prussia. At the same time the prosperity of the Hansa was at an end. With a lack of surplus population, its cities ceased to grow, while restrictive policies aimed at foreign competition only led to stagnation.

At the same time as German expansion was coming to an end and the Italian supremacy in the Levant was being undermined, Portuguese and Catalan voyages were making known the Azores, the Canaries and Madeira. Under the inspiration of Prince Henry the 'Navigator', these islands were colonised by the Portuguese and voyages were undertaken down the African coast. By the time of Henry's death in 1460 Portuguese sailors had reached the Gulf of Guinea.

Europe stood on the threshold of the 'Great Discoveries'. In a sense these were part of the move westwards of the Italians. In 1291 the Vivaldi brothers of Genoa set off to discover the western route to the Indies. The Genoese were to play a large part in Portuguese and Spanish colonisation. They introduced the planting of sugar and cotton, even the use of slaves, from the Italian colonies in the Levant. They dominated the market of Seville.

Though this all points to Europe's renewed expansion overseas, the legacy of the middle ages should not be forgotten. The lands of the Baltic and eastern Europe opened up by the Germans remained an essential part of the economic framework, and the Mediterranean continued to provide a market for the goods of western Europe. A European economy had been brought into existence. Its frontiers were not all that much different from those of Christendom in 1204, but spiritual bonds had been replaced by economic ones.



The papacy

The central reign of Innocent III – pope and emperor compete for power – rival systems within the Church – the development of the secular state in France, King and people oppose the pope – the papal schism – the pope compromises with the princes.

The strength of the papacy lay in its continuously developed doctrine relating to the standing, function and authority of the Roman Church; it was a doctrine which had steadily evolved since the mid-fifth century. By the time of Innocent III it had reached the high-water mark of its logical consistency. From this zenith of evolution and actual power exercised there was, throughout the thirteenth century, a gradual decrease of papal authority, with consequential changes throughout Christendom.

The aim of this chapter is to explain how these changes came about. The key is perhaps to be found in the term papal monarchy. This can be defined as the exercise of supreme papal authority over all aspects of Christian life, both temporal and spiritual. Under Innocent III it was seen only as a means of fulfilling the papal mission to lead Christians to salvation by way of the Church; but under his successors it was increasingly obvious that preservation of authority was becoming an end in itself. The papacy found it more and more difficult to meet the spiritual needs of the time. This was perhaps at the basis of the changed position of the papacy.

Innocent III in the light of papal tradition

The reign of Innocent III (1198–1216) was crucial to the development of papal monarchy. This does not mean that his reign marked a break in papal history. He had the same concept of his office as his predecessors.

The papacy was held to be a divinely instituted office, set over the community of the faithful, the Church. Each pope was the direct successor of St Peter and, as such, possessed the fullness of power which the Apostle had received from Christ. This was pure doctrine. It only became enforceable in the fifth century A.D. when the power of law was harnessed to it. This had come about as the result of two developments. On the one hand, the pope was acknowledged as the sole interpreter of the Bible, and on the other, the Bible was treated as a legal text. It meant that Christians were subordinated to the papacy not simply spiritually, but also juridically. The pope became the supreme judge and legislator of Christian society.

The true importance of this development hardly becomes clear much before the middle of the eleventh century. The struggle between Rome and Constantinople for the primacy of Christendom led to a deeper elucidation of the nature of papal authority. It was found to be quite incompatible with any lay control over the Church. This was to become the basic issue in the Investiture Controversy, a conflict which developed during the late eleventh century between the papacy and the secular rulers of Christendom.

The papacy's main opponent was the German emperor. Not only did he exercise a very tight control over the Church in his dominions, but his claims to be the head of Christian society cut right across papal ideology. The outcome of the Investiture Controversy was not a complete victory for the papacy. It had to compromise over the question of ecclesiastical appointments; and although the pope, and not the emperor, emerged as the universally recognised head of Christendom, the problem of the Empire was not solved.

During the second half of the twelfth century the papacy was faced with two outstanding German emperors, Frederick Barbarossa and his son Henry VI. They were determined to restore real authority to the imperial title. A very sharp distinction was drawn between spiritual and temporal power: the former belonged to the papacy, while the latter was to be exercised by the emperor. Additional support for imperial claims was found in Roman law. The emperor claimed to be heir to the supreme authority of the Roman emperor.

A deeper explanation of papal authority was needed in the face of such claims. It culminated in the concept that the pope was the Vicar of Christ. The pope was seen as the intersection between heaven and earth; he was, as Innocent III claimed, less than God but greater than man. He was set above the kingdoms of the world; it was his duty to see that no Christian was denied justice,

Left: Frederick Barbarossa (1152–1190) *sought to restore to the empire the authority lost in the Investiture Controversy. Below: the coronation of the emperor Henry V. His accession inaugurated a new phase in the controversy. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

and he was responsible for the welfare and good order of Christian society.

The relationship between the papacy and secular rulers had also to be put on a firmer footing. The view was gradually taking shape that the rulers were part of a hierarchy established by God for the fulfilment of His purpose and that there ought to be a division of labour between the secular rulers and the papacy; there must, of course, be co-operation, but the vital point was that sovereignty was to rest with the papacy.

The foundations of papal monarchy were laid in more concrete ways. Rulers were placing their territories under papal protection and becoming papal vassals. The papacy was beginning to exert more effective control over the Church at large. More appeals were being brought before the pope, and the independence of the bishops began to be limited as a result of the increased centralisation of the Church of Rome. Not only were organs of papal government being developed in Rome itself, but increased use was being made of papal legates sent out to examine the condition of the Church in its various provinces and adjudicate in the numerous litigations. At the same time stronger legal backing was given to papal authority by the work of canon lawyers.

The political background of Innocent III's reign

The significance of these developments became apparent during Innocent III's reign: he was able to turn them into a well-knit system of papal government, to some extent because he was more fortunate than his immediate predecessors in the circumstances of his reign.

Frederick Barbarossa had tried to dominate Italy. In the face of this threat, the papacy had been inclined to stress the division of labour between emperor and papacy and to mute its claims to sovereignty. The papacy was able to preserve its independence of action only because the cities of Lombardy refused to accept direct imperial control. They banded together, under the leadership of Milan and with the encouragement of the papacy, in an alliance known as the Lombard League. In 1176 they defeated the imperial forces at the battle of Legnano. It was clear that Barbarossa would not be able to dominate Italy and he reached some accommodation with the pope. Henry VI revived plans for controlling Rome. He had married the heiress of the Norman kingdom of Sicily; and because he possessed a firm base in Sicily, he in some ways posed a far more serious threat to the papacy than his father had.

The immediate background to Innocent III's reign was not very promising. There was the threat from the emperors; Jerusalem had not been recovered by the Third Crusade; anti-clericalism and heresy were

*A fifteenth-century representation of the coronation of Louis VIII (*1223–1226*). The king's annointing came to have a special place in the coronation. It brought him under God's protection. In France legends grew up around the rite, according to which the phial containing the oil had been used at the baptism of Clovis, and was miraculously refilled before each coronation.* Grandes Chroniques de France. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

rife; papal control over the Church was not yet as tight as its ideology demanded; the Church was still in devious ways subjected to lay influence. On the other hand, Henry VI had died shortly before Innocent's election, and Innocent was able to impose his own solution on the disputed succession that followed. One of the main obstacles to the development of a papal monarchy was removed. Perhaps even more important was the way in which Innocent III placed himself at the head of the demand for reform.

Innocent III: reform of the Church

During Innocent's reign the political background was favourable to the development of papal monarchy. The assertion of papal monarchy was not primarily the extension of papal authority in temporal affairs, nor was it the subjection of the territories of Christendom to the political control of the Holy See. It was simply a means of bringing right order to Christendom and of caring for its welfare. This could only be accomplished if the papacy had overall supervision of every aspect of Christian life. 'Nothing that happens in the world', wrote Innocent III, 'should escape the notice of the supreme pontiff.' In this sense, papal monarchy was an integral part of his plan to reform the Church. There was no need for Innocent to step outside the bounds of tradition; he was only putting into practice a point of view which had been taking shape since the time of the Investiture Controversy.

Innocent tried to make sure that suitable men were appointed to bishoprics; because the bishops were the essential instruments for the proper functioning of the Church. He did not interfere in elections if they were properly conducted, but he insisted that disputed elections should be referred to him for judgement and that in these cases the papal choice should be accepted. He was constantly urging the bishops not to neglect their pastoral work, and to raise the standard of their lower clergy.

Innocent was naturally preoccupied with the behaviour of the clergy; they should do nothing to cause scandal in the Church, not even by the way they dressed. But he did not neglect the morals of the laity. The rite of marriage was not to be abused; and he delivered careful judgements, not just in the marital affairs of princes, but also in those of

ordinary men and women. He patronised Fulk de Neuilly, whose work was devoted among other things to rescuing prostitutes.

These are relatively minor matters, but they show Innocent's determination to supervise all aspects of Christian society. His main task was perhaps to deal with the problem of heresy and to answer critics of the Church. He was faced with the dualist heresy of the Cathari of southern France and Italy. They believed in the world of the flesh created and dominated by the Devil and the world of the spirit created and dominated by God. This was particularly dangerous to the papacy, which was laying stress upon the unity of Christendom under a single ruler. Innocent regarded heretics as guilty of high treason, because they had rejected the faith which held society together.

Though it was the duty of the secular ruler to aid in the extermination of the heretics found in his territories, Innocent received very little support from Philip Augustus of France against the Cathari of southern France, who were known as the Albigensians. The crusade against them was led by papal legates; it was enthusiastically received by the barons of northern France, and it became a war of conquest by men eager to find new lands in Toulouse and Languedoc.

There were other ways of combating heresy. Innocent patronised the new preaching orders, the Dominican and Franciscan friars. They used the same methods as the heretics, going into their strongholds, preaching, and holding public meetings. But it meant something more than this: Innocent was harnessing to the Church spiritual forces that until then had been outside and critical of the established Church.

The papacy not only had the task of confirming Christians in their faith; it also had to urge them to extend the faith among the heathen. Innocent encouraged the work of German missionaries in Livonia, but characteristically insisted that conversion of the pagans should not be carried through with excessive rigour.

In addition the papacy held itself responsible for protecting the Holy Places; and Innocent III certainly felt that the recovery of Jerusalem was among his most urgent tasks. One of his first actions on becoming pope was to preach a crusade. The outcome of the Fourth Crusade, which set off from Venice in 1202, was not perhaps that envisaged by Innocent, but the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 was hailed by him, because it seemed to be a solution to the age-old struggle between Rome and Constantinople for the primacy of the Church.

Innocent III: the growth of papal government

Innocent III's reforming activity culminated in the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. A code of disciplinary decrees was enacted which was to serve as a legal basis for the exercise of papal government. It was the climax of a great burst of development in Church law which aimed at a better definition of papal authority. Uniformity was also encouraged by the spread of Roman liturgical practices, and centralisation of the Church on Rome proceeded apace.

Papal administration at Rome was reformed; one of the first steps that Innocent III took as pontiff was to stamp out corruption among the hangers-on of the papal court. The chancery was reorganised and an attempt was made to deal with the mass of litigation that came flooding into Rome. Innocent also benefited from the effort made in 1192 to put papal revenues on a regular footing. Special officers were sent out in an attempt to obtain better payment of papal revenues; and in 1199 the first papal tax on clerical incomes was instituted to help to pay for the Fourth Crusade.

Papal government was further strengthened by the still greater use made of papal legates. They were sent out to all parts of Christendom and enabled the pope to exercise authority in areas that were not amenable to direct control from Rome. The legates held provincial councils, which provided an opportunity for putting papal legislation into practice. The legates were not simply agents in ecclesiastical affairs, but often had an important part to play in purely political matters.

Relations with secular rulers

Innocent III's guiding aim was the reform and welfare of the Church, but it was quite impossible for him to carry out this task without at some point coming into conflict with secular rulers. His reign saw a more careful appreciation of the exact nature of the division of authority between the papacy and the secular rulers. It was part of a king's duty to help lead his people to salvation, but the pope could intervene if he judged the king to be obviously failing in this duty; for otherwise the good order of Christendom would be endangered. Innocent III intervened in temporal affairs not so much because he was supreme sovereign of Christendom, but rather because the welfare of Christian society appeared to be threatened. This does not mean that he claimed to exercise only indirect power in temporal affairs; on the contrary, he could intervene directly, but only in exceptional circumstances which he was to define. Two hierarchies, a spiritual and a temporal one, were necessary for the administration of Christendom, but the pope claimed supreme and final authority over each. The pope, Innocent maintained, was a priest after the order of Melchisedech, who combined the functions of both priest and king.

If the papacy was to carry out its mission properly, it had to be free from external pressures. It must not again become the plaything of Roman politics, as it had so often been in the past. Innocent was determined to secure full control over the city of Rome; he succeeded, even though it meant temporary exile. A further step was to recover papal control over central Italy; this would not only protect the papacy from its enemies, but would also give the papacy a temporal basis of power. Innocent obtained recognition of papal rights over a large part of central Italy from the rival candidates for the imperial title; and he tried, not with complete success, to organise it into a coherent state governed by rectors appointed from Rome.

Good order in Christendom demanded that the imperial office should go to a suitable candidate. By the end of the twelfth century the theory had been formulated that the Empire had been taken away from the Greeks and given by the papacy to the Germans. The papacy insisted that it had the right to examine the fitness of the man chosen by the German electors as so-called King of the Romans, or in the case of a disputed election, to make a choice between the rival candidates. The papacy refused to crown automatically as emperor the candidate presented by the German electors. On the other hand, it was claimed that the coronation of the emperor was a mere formality, because the elected candidate had a right to become emperor and the pope a duty to crown him.

The disputed election after Henry VI's death (1197) meant that Innocent III was perhaps the first pope in a position to make good these papal claims. He chose Otto of Brunswick as the most suitable claimant. When Otto showed himself unworthy of his office by invading the Kingdom of Sicily, which had passed to Henry VI's son Frederick, and by threatening the Papal States, Innocent excommunicated him and then supported Frederick's claims as King of Sicily. While in all this Innocent was motivated by a desire for the general welfare of Christendom, he was not indifferent to political considerations. He was determined to keep his freedom of action: central Italy must remain under papal control. This stand had far-reaching political implications.

Innocent III had less grounds for intervention in the affairs of the kingdoms of Christendom. He normally intervened for purely ecclesiastical reasons. His long-lasting quarrel with King John of England arose out of the disputed election of an archbishop of Canterbury; John refused to accept Innocent's nominee. England was placed under an interdict, barring the country from ecclesiastical functions as was Norway when its king, Sverre (1184–1204), refused to abide by an earlier Church settlement. Innocent III also quarrelled with Philip Augustus when he repudiated his wife without just cause.

Innocent considered it his duty to bring

Right: three Dominican friars minister to a bishop on the point of death. The papacy's appeal for a crusade harnessed the violence and energy of medieval society.
Below: knights set off on the Albigensian Crusade. They went filled with a primitive faith, but this only heightened their brutality and greed. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

peace to Christendom. In 1199 peace was made between Philip Augustus and Richard I of England thanks to the good offices of the papal legate, Peter of Capua. In 1204, when Innocent tried to save John, and forbade Philip to continue with the conquest of Normandy, Philip protested that the Pope was interfering in an essentially feudal dispute. Innocent justified his action on the grounds that the moral order was being threatened: Philip had broken a peace treaty concluded with the English king.

At the same time, it is true, the papacy did make use of its feudal connections. In 1207 Poland again placed itself under papal protection. The papacy's feudal control

over England was tightened as a result of John's submission to Innocent; this also happened in Sicily, where under the terms of Constanza's will, Innocent had become regent for the young Frederick. Innocent III exploited his feudal overlordship, which also extended to Portugal, Aragon and Hungary, not in order to introduce direct papal control, but to secure favourable conditions for papal legates and the local hierarchy.

Innocent III's legacy

Just as Innocent III's reign saw the culmination of the work of earlier popes, so the history of the thirteenth-century papacy was determined to a very large extent by Innocent III's legacy. Papal monarchy had emerged, but its implications still remained to be worked out. It would have to be defended. As a result the nature of papal authority would have to be further elucidated.

Innocent III handed on to his successors not only the lines of policy that they would have to follow, but also the main problems with which they would have to deal; for

A fifteenth-century representation of the Battle of Bouvines (1214). Philip Augustus (1180–1223) of France defeated Emperor Otto of Brunswick and his ally, the count of Flanders. This was a turning point of medieval history: it marked the arrival of French leadership in Europe. This was later to strike at the heart of papal authority. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

despite his great achievements, his work was hardly finished at the time of his death. Heresy had not been destroyed; there remained the problem of the crusade and the Greek Church; control over the Papal States was very precarious, threatened by internal unrest and Frederick II's lieutenants. In 1220 Frederick added the imperial title to his Sicilian crown; and the spectre of imperial domination of the papacy was to lead to a bitter struggle between the papacy and Frederick II; the disposal of the Empire and the kingdom of Sicily was to be of major concern to the papacy.

The thirteenth-century papacy sought its solutions in the work of Innocent III: there was the same emphasis on the centralisation of the Church, while the unity of Christendom under the papacy was increasingly stressed.

The thirteenth-century papacy: theory and practice

The thirteenth century did not really see more extreme claims advanced for papal sovereignty; it was rather a greater insistence upon the papacy's role as the head of Christendom. What the canon lawyers did was not to advance exaggerated claims, of papal supremacy, but to define more clearly the occasions on which the papacy had the right to intervene in so-called temporal affairs to uphold the right order of Christian society.

The nature of papal authority did not alter: the pope was still seen as a divinely appointed vicar of Christ, fully empowered to look after the needs of Christian society. Regard for the welfare of Christendom was still the foremost duty of the papacy. The fight against heresy was continued: the Albigensian crusade was brought to a successful conclusion; the Franciscans did much to clear Italy of heresy. The culmination of Innocent III's work against heresy came with the adoption of the inquisitorial machinery for judicial purposes under Gregory IX (1227–1241) and Innocent IV (1243–1254).

The possibilities of missionary work

among the Mongols were explored. Innocent IV despatched emissaries to the Mongol ruler from the first Council of Lyons (1245). At about the same time efforts were made to bring the pagan Lithuanians and the Orthodox Christians of Russia within the papal fold, while a little earlier the Order of Teutonic Knights was established in Prussia under papal patronage. There was even an attempt to put the Order under the control of a papal legate.

Serious efforts were made to implement papal primacy over the Greek Church; negotiations begun under Innocent III between papal legates and representatives of the Greek Church continued intermittently throughout the period leading up to the Greek recovery of Constantinople in 1261. They came to a head in 1274 at the second Council of Lyons, when a Union of Greek and Latin Churches was formally proclaimed. The primacy of the pope was recognised by the council, and Latin practices were to be introduced into the Greek Church.

Gregory X (1271–1276) had called the Council of Lyons with the express purpose of uniting Christendom in preparation for a crusade. The crusade was still central to papal policy; and there was an effort to obtain closer control over the actual expeditions. Like Innocent III, the thirteenth-century popes had one fundamental answer to the multitude of problems that confronted them. Papal control must be made ever tighter over all aspects of Christian life.

The power of papal legates in all parts of Christendom was one of the characteristics of the thirteenth-century papacy and helps explain its great authority. The importance and the very great work of some of the papal legates is perhaps best seen in England. After John's death in 1216 the government of the country was entrusted to a regency council in which the papal legate was one of the leading figures. Throughout the troubled reign of Henry III (1216–1272) papal legates were at hand to help the king to patch up his quarrels with the barons. The high standard of the English Church during the thirteenth century is another tribute to the legates' abilities.

Closer papal supervision also meant increasing centralisation. Administration began to be departmentalised. By the end of the thirteenth century separate judicial, financial and administrative sections had emerged.

The growth of administration and the scope of papal government demanded increased revenues. The incomes derived from papal estates and from various tributes did not suffice. Income taxes on clerical revenues were turned towards the costs of administration; dues paid by prelates on the occasion of receiving their office from the pope ceased to be customary gratuities and became a fixed tax and the papacy's most lucrative source of revenue. A scale of fees was fixed for hearing a suit before the papal courts and for papal letters and bulls obtained from the chancery. But the systematisation of revenues was not sufficient to pay for the upkeep of the rapidly expanding civil service. To meet this difficulty, by the reign of Innocent IV it was becoming necessary to reserve more and more benefices for papal nominees. These two related developments, increased papal taxation and increased control over ecclesiastical patronage, perhaps more than anything else brought home the power of the papacy.

The struggle with Emperor Frederick II (1212–1250)

The increased centralisation of the Church and the greater range of papal authority were in part the logical conclusion of Innocent III's work; they were also a reaction to the threat posed by the Emperor Frederick II. He aroused the distrust as well as the admiration of his contemporaries and has been a source of wonder to succeeding generations. There has been much talk of a man born out of his times, but his aims and even his methods were essentially those of his father and grandfather.

He wanted to restore dignity and authority to the imperial office, but this could only be achieved if the pope's power was strictly limited to the spiritual sphere. He laid emphasis on the supreme authority accorded to the emperor by Roman law; subsequently, perhaps influenced by the ideas of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, he did advance beyond old positions when he claimed that a human form of organisation, the state, and not the divine institution of the Church, was the natural object of the human community. He also demanded that the pope should stand trial before a general council, because in his view it represented the whole Church, from which papal power was derived. But such claims should not be allowed to obscure the fact that the imperial case rested on the old concept of the world order, in which all power ultimately went back to Christ. This played right into the hands of the papacy; for the pope was still universally regarded as the Vicar of Christ.

The struggle with Frederick was so bitter because Innocent III's legacy was placed in jeopardy not only by imperial demands that papal power should be limited to spiritual matters, but also by the attempt to restore imperial control over Italy.

Frederick had promised Innocent III that he would give up the kingdom of Sicily as soon as he became emperor. He failed to keep this promise. Sicily was too valuable; also he was attached to it by the ties of a childhood passed for the most part in Palermo. The early part of his reign as emperor was spent reorganising his Sicilian kingdom and bringing it thoroughly under his control. It was to be the base from which to subordinate northern Italy and then to

An illustration taken from Emperor Frederick II's treatise on falconry. In it he expressed his intention of 'setting forth the things that are, as they are'. It was this scientific spirit, rare in the middle ages, that earned him the distrust of his contemporaries. His opponents called him the 'Anti-Christ'. Miniatures from Traité de Chasse *of Frederick II. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

set about restoring imperial authority in Germany.

Frederick's ambitions aroused the suspicions of the papacy. A state of undeclared war had existed for many years before 1239, when the struggle began in earnest. In 1229 a papal army invaded Naples while Frederick was away on a crusade. The papacy also encouraged the resistance of the Lombard cities to imperial control. The Lombard League was revived under the leadership of Milan.

Not all cities joined. Pavia and Cremona, traditional enemies of Milan, preferred to enter the imperial camp. Italy was split into two opposing groups: the one supported the papacy and was known as the Guelf party; the other, which was called the Ghibelline party, supported the imperial cause. Their rivalry was to divide Italy for nearly 200 years; it was to lead to faction within cities and to feuds within families. The main alignments were decided not so much by loyalty to pope or emperor as by purely local considerations. In Tuscany Florence supported the Guelf cause; its main commercial rival Lucca entered the Ghibelline camp. Pisa, with a large stake in the trade of Sicily and Naples, supported the emperor; its great trading rival, Genoa, was usually true to the papacy.

The Papal States were a constant source of friction. Frederick needed some control over them to keep open his lines of communication from Sicily to Lombardy and Germany. After the outbreak of war he had comparatively little difficulty in reducing them to obedience. Pope Innocent IV, realising that at Rome his freedom of action was severely circumscribed by imperial power, fled to seek safety outside Italy. In 1245 he called a general council which met at Lyons—a stone's throw from French territory—and deposed Frederick.

The papal legate was sent to Germany to exploit local differences and to ensure that Frederick obtained no support from that quarter. Frederick was in fact rather weak militarily; it was all he could do to hold down Lombardy. In 1248 his small army was destroyed at Parma by a papal force.

Frederick died two years later. Innocent IV might exult, but the threat to the papacy was not yet over: neither Germany nor Sicily immediately passed to rulers amenable to papal control. Frederick's son Conrad kept his inheritance together; and after the latter's death in 1254 Sicily and Naples fell to Frederick's bastard son Manfred. By 1261 Manfred was in a position to dominate Italy. To avert this threat the papacy gave the kingdom of Sicily to Charles of Anjou, brother of the French King Louis IX. In 1266 Charles invaded Naples, defeating and killing Manfred. The kingdom thus passed to the Angevins.

It took the papacy a little longer to find a satisfactory solution to the German problem. There was a period where there was no ruler, lasting until 1272, because the papacy was unwilling to crown emperor either of the two foreign princes chosen by the German electors. But with the accession of Rudolf of Habsburg, the dangers which had threatened the papacy for so long seemed to be over: Rudolf was ready to abandon imperial pretensions and build up a German monarchy with papal backing.

The coronation of Charles of Anjou after his conquest of Naples and Sicily from Frederick II's bastard son Manfred in 1266. *Like so many rulers of Sicily before him, he dreamed of founding a Mediterranean empire; his plans had the approval of the papacy, but they foundered in* 1282, *when the Sicilians rose up against French domination. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Criticism of the papacy

The struggle with Frederick II amply demonstrated the power of the papacy, but other dangers were in store. There was perhaps too great a reliance on the support of the kings of France; and there was also the possibility that the Angevins would come to dominate Italy, thus placing in jeopardy once more the papacy's freedom of action.

The threat to the papacy went deeper than this. It received mounting criticism. It was argued that it was becoming too much of this world and increasingly neglecting its spiritual work; it seemed to have too little regard for the ideals of Apostolic Poverty. These were points of view well exploited by Frederick II's propagandists, but even so faithful a son of the Church as St Louis could complain to Innocent IV about his fiscal exactions, and his reservations of benefices. This sort of criticism is also to be seen in England in the work of Matthew Paris. Satires against papal venality grew more virulent. Men objected to the dues paid by prelates consecrated by the pope and to fees involved in carrying through a law-

This map shows the extent of the Hohenstaufen Empire about 1250. *A violent conflict took place between the empire and the papacy because the emperor Frederick II believed that the pope's power should be purely spiritual—a view which the pope vigorously opposed. Frederick II also tried to restore imperial control over Italy and refused to surrender the Kingdom of Sicily. Eventually the imperial troops were defeated by the papal armies, but ultimately the struggle damaged both the empire and the Church.*

suit at Rome: it was nothing other than the sin of selling justice and ecclesiastical offices. The growth of papal taxation was extremely unpopular and resulted in tax riots. The practice of presenting aliens with Church property on English soil was also strongly resented, and in 1231 a small Yorkshire landowner called Robert Tweng led an armed protest against it.

The new forces

Criticism of the papacy was uncoordinated; it was often no more than personal pique. Usually it expressed only a vague disquiet with the state of the Church, and was mainly aimed against what were considered the excesses of papal power. There was no attack on papal authority as such.

Dissatisfaction of this sort became much more dangerous when allied to other forces taking shape during the thirteenth century. Together they were to do much to undermine the very basis of papal monarchy.

The growth of royal government was perhaps the most important of these new forces. At first this development was welcomed by the papacy, which did not appreciate the dangers it held in store. It was seen as a means of bringing good order more easily to Christian society. There were certainly clashes between the growing papal and royal administrations, but they could be settled without any violent struggle because both king and pope had roughly the same concept of sovereignty.

On the other hand, the growth of royal government during the thirteenth century produced a state of affairs at variance with the ideology to which both sides subscribed. The increasing range of royal administration gave greater definition and unity to the territories belonging to the king. Contemporaries became increasingly aware that the primary allegiance of a subject was owed to the king rather than to the pope. Within his lands the king must not have any superior, and his kingdom was not to come under any superior authority. In other words, the king was to be emperor in his own realm.

These political developments were given the necessary ideological backing by the spread of Aristotelian ideas, which cut right to the heart of papal authority. Political power did not come from God; the state was not a divine creation. Instead, Aristotle emphasised the natural origins of the state; while power within the state, far from being derived from above, sprang from below. Sovereignty rested with the whole community, though it could in practice be exercised by a ruler as the representative of the community.

With this went an even more fundamental change: all members of the community had a natural right to participate in the government of the state. In other words, they were no longer subjects of an omnipotent ruler, but citizens of a state, to whom

Other illustrations from Frederick II's treatise on falconry. They show the importance he attached to exact observation. His passionate interest in falconry stemmed from his desire to discover the secret workings of nature. In all this the influence of Aristotle is very clear. Miniatures from the Trait. de Chasse de Frédéric II. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

the ruler was responsible for his actions.

These new ideas held dangers for royal authority as well as papal monarchy. Kings were, however, able to come to terms with them more easily, for the ground had already been prepared by feudalism; the king's power was in varying degrees limited by the feudal contract with his vassals. No such adjustment was possible for the papacy. It had no alternative but to cling to its old objectives and ideals; it seemed to follow blindly along the path mapped out by a centuries-old tradition and notably by Innocent III. Popes saw the ills of the Church, but could only supply old-fashioned remedies. Otherwise its authority might be endangered. There was the same insistence on the crusade and the policy of centralisation. The papacy was failing to meet the true needs of the time. Alienation from the established Church was increasing; and it is not surprising that during the later middle ages the papacy was faced with a series of crises both in and outside the Church.

Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair

Serious tensions within the Church had already begun to show themselves by the time of Boniface's accession in 1294. His predecessor Celestine V had been forced to abdicate because of his alleged incompetence. This gave rise to claims that Boniface's election had been irregular. There seems to have been a split in the college of cardinals; and Boniface was to be hounded by the Spiritual Franciscans, who had been patronised by Celestine. The circumstances surrounding his election were to be a constant source of weakness to Boniface.

They were to be exploited by his main opponent, Philip IV of France (1285–1314). A first clash over clerical taxation in 1296 was patched up very quickly. It had no direct connection with the real struggle, which began in 1301. The actual pretext seems trivial enough. A French bishop was arrested and tried before the royal court for slandering the king. Boniface insisted that the case should come before him for trial, because bishops came under direct papal jurisdiction. The actual cause of the quarrel was not so important as the principles at stake. It turned into a conflict of opposing concepts of sovereignty. Boniface re-stated the now traditional papal case: the papacy possessed supreme authority in both temporal and spiritual affairs. Philip was willing to recognise that the papacy had supreme spiritual power, but claimed that in temporal matters no outside power could claim suzerainty over his kingdom.

The clash gave rise to a spate of propaganda defending the position taken up by Philip the Fair. Some of it was official; some of it was composed by masters of the University of Paris. Of the two main themes in the royal defence, the first was that the king was simply protecting his kingdom against the claims of the papacy. The other theme hinged on defining the respective spheres of ecclesiastical and secular authority. One of the royal propagandists, obviously much influenced by Aristotelian ideas, saw the state as the only source and sole foundation of real power; and this was to be exercised by the king. Consequently, the Church in its temporal existence ought to be subordinated to the king. These claims were not so very different from the position taken up by Frederick II's defenders, who provided the French propagandists with many of their arguments. Even Philip IV's strategy of bringing Boniface for judgement before a general council went back to the men around Frederick II. What was new was that French propaganda had a firm footing in the Aristotelian view of the state.

Below: Clement IV invests Charles of Anjou, brother of St Louis of France, with the kingdom of Sicily. Fresco from Pernes, France.

This had practical implications. The victor would be the one who had the support of the French people united as a nation and of the Church universal. Boniface, claiming that he was protecting the Church in France from royal oppression, called a council of French bishops to meet in Rome to consider reform of the Church in France. Only half the French bishops came, and nothing was accomplished. Philip, on the other hand, was able to demonstrate the support he had from the people of France: representative assemblies of both clergy and laity were called together, and the royal case was explained to them. The king appeared to be acting in his quarrel with the papacy not as a ruler, whose power was divine in origin, but as the representative of his people, making them believe that he spoke as the agent of the nation.

Philip's victory

While the French people stood solidly behind their king, the situation in Italy exposed the weakness of the papacy. Boniface relied on French and Angevin aid in the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines; he was also faced with the hostility of the powerful Colonna family. In 1303 Philip's minister William Nogaret, with the support of the Colonnas, took Boniface prisoner at Anagni; he was to be brought for trial before a general council. Boniface was rescued by the local inhabitants, only to die a few weeks later.

Philip continued his struggle against Boniface beyond the grave. He demanded that the measures taken against him should

Left: the coats of arms of German princes. Power in Germany during the later middle ages came to rest with the territorial princes. This was taken a step further in 1356 *in the Golden Bull of the Emperor Charles IV. By it the right of electing the emperor was vested in seven electors, and it was these rather than the emperor who came to dominate German politics. At the same time the careful definition of procedure left the papacy with little excuse for interference. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

be disavowed. The problem confronting Boniface's successors, Benedict XI (1303-1305) and Clement V (1305–1314), was how to come to an agreement with Philip and yet preserve papal authority intact. They were willing to absolve Philip from his excommunication by Boniface and to declare that Boniface had not intended to assert any new claim by the papacy to lordship over France. This did not go far enough. Philip brought pressure to bear on the papacy, on the one hand by suppressing the Order of Templars, and on the other by threatening a posthumous trial of Boniface. Clement V agreed to open such a trial. He prevaricated and it was allowed to drop, but only after he had ordered the deletion from the registers of the papal chancery of all matter that might be injurious to the king of France.

The popes at Avignon

The need to come to a compromise with the king of France was one of the reasons which led Pope Clement V to fix his residence at Avignon. It also lay close to Vienne, where a general council assembled in 1311; Clement had to be sure that this council would be controlled by the papacy and not dominated by the French king. A return to Italy was then out of the question because of the turmoil there; the struggle between the Guelfs and the Ghibellines was resumed with new fervour after the Emperor Henry VII's Italian expedition in 1312. Another consideration may have been that Avignon was much better situated for administrative purposes than Rome.

The encounter with Philip the Fair and the exile of the papacy at Avignon has usually been taken to mark one of the great turning points in papal history; but this is true in only a rather limited sense. The Avignonese popes continued to assert the claims of papal monarchy and followed the politics of their predecessors. They saw the crusade as a remedy for all the ills of Christendom and promoted several to hold back the Turks. They were patrons of missionary work in the Far East. They continued to fight against heresy.

The administrative machinery developed during the thirteenth century was brought to a peak of efficiency. The great organiser was John XXII (1316–1334). The papal fiscal system was regularised, and new sources of revenue were found. Papal tax-collectors were given permanent commissions and had powers of excommunication to enforce payment of papal taxes. Italian bankers were employed on an increasingly large scale to transmit revenues from all corners of Christendom. At the same time the judicial system was perfected to deal with the growing volume of appeals; these came before the tribunal called the *Rota Romana*. Increased centralisation was also to be seen in the policy of reserving more and more benefices for papal nominees. Virtually all appointments to higher ecclesiastical office now came under papal scrutiny. This was the cause of bitter criticism, but it should be stressed that the candidates were examined scrupulously. It was altogether a more just system.

The Avignonese papacy was only too conscious of its duty to bring peace to Christendom. This was seen as essential to a successful crusade. John XXII intervened in Edward II's difficulties in Scotland and Ireland and helped to negotiate a peace with the Scots. Later, a more urgent task was to restore peace between England and France. From 1337 to 1341 Benedict XII forbade Philip VI of France to take the offensive against Edward III. One can hardly doubt the papacy's sincerity, but the result of papal intervention, far from bringing about peace, was to ensure that neither side would gain outright victory, in other words to prolong the war. The French were helped by papal loans and the papacy did everything in its power to prevent Flanders coming under English control.

In this the papacy was motivated by a desire to preserve the *status quo*; defence of the established order was essential if papal authority was to be upheld. Kings were to be protected from their barons and their subjects. Edward II was forced to rely on papal support when faced with baronial opposition. John XXII dissolved a feudal league which threatened Philip V of France. He also waged a long and unsuccessful campaign on behalf of the Brienne family, which had been driven out of their duchy of Thebes by Catalan mercenaries.

The way was being prepared for a compromise between the papacy and the princes of Christendom. This first became clear over papal taxation and appointments. Popular pressure sometimes forced the king into legislation designed to limit the effects of papal patronage and jurisdiction, but this does not reflect the essence of royal policy. The papacy might present candidates to the great ecclesiastical offices, but a man acceptable to the ruler was almost always chosen. In England the provision of aliens to bishoprics was virtually unknown during the fourteenth century. Patronage was an essential part of both royal and papal government. It was tacitly agreed that it should be shared to their mutual advantage. In the same way, it was usual for the king to take a large share of papal taxation.

This type of compromise certainly had its roots back in the thirteenth century, if not before, but now it was on the point of becoming the foundation on which the exercise of papal monarchy depended. It was a sign that mere preservation of authority was becoming an end in itself. It was now virtually impossible to find new means of assuaging religious discontent. The Franciscans revived the question of apostolic poverty. John XXII's only answer was to persecute them and in 1323 to

condemn the doctrine of poverty. New constitutions were provided for the religious orders. The solutions of the Avignonese papacy were essentially administrative; and its false position became clear when its administration grew more oppressive as a result of papal involvement in Italy.

The return to Italy and the last struggle with the empire

It was always the intention of the popes to return to Rome. Plans were made under John XXII and Benedict XII to move to Bologna in preparation for an eventual return. Urban V set out for Rome but was driven back to Avignon. It was clear that the papacy had to have control of the situation, but this was not conceived just in terms of restoration of papal authority in Rome and the surrounding region. It was hoped that the turmoil of Guelfs and Ghibellines would provide an opportunity to assert papal authority over the whole of northern and central Italy. Temporal power was needed to back up the spiritual and administrative strength of the papacy. The search for temporal power in Italy had its origins at least as far back as the reign of Innocent III, but now it was seen as a possible foundation of papal authority.

There were two major obstacles to papal ambitions. The cities of Lombardy and Tuscany, even those sympathetic to the papal cause, would tolerate only a very limited degree of papal control. Florence, which prided itself on being a most faithful daughter of the Church, preferred to go to war with the papacy rather than let the papal legate obtain any real measure of control in Tuscany.

Secondly, the designs of the papacy conflicted with the ambitions of the German King Louis of Bavaria (1314–1347). He too sought to take advantage of the struggles within Italy to revive imperial claims.

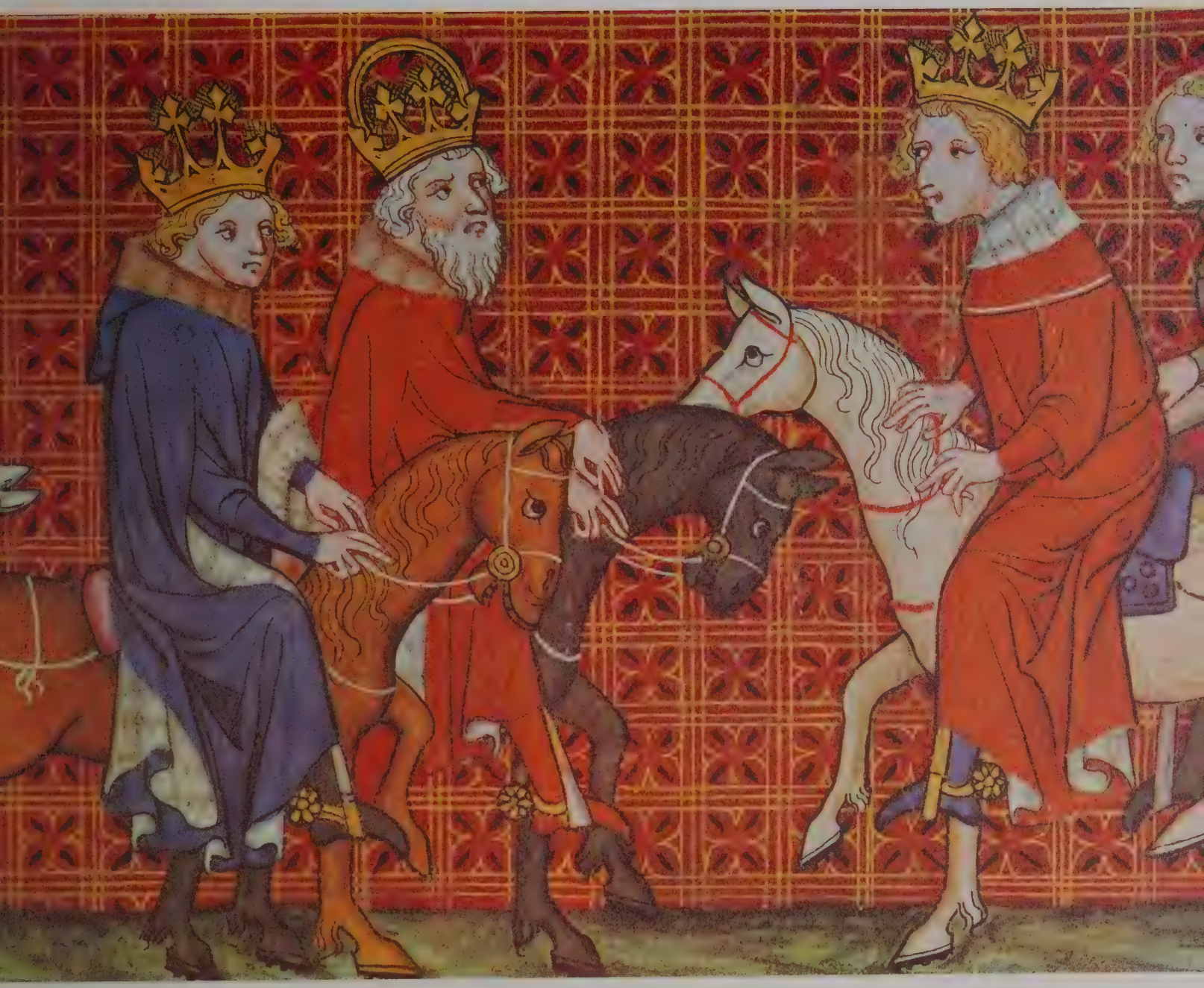
It was a strange encounter. On the ideological level it was fought with the full panoply of arguments and counter-claims developed since the Investiture Controversy; these were reinforced on the imperial side by the work of Marsiglio of Padua and William of Ockham. It underlined the bankruptcy of both sides: it confirmed that as an international institution the Empire was a thing of the past, but this in turn meant that papal intervention in the affairs of Germany was unlikely to have much meaning. Papal appointees to German benefices were often rejected. John XXII could claim that the administration of the Empire lay with the pope until he had crowned the electors' choice as emperor; but this mattered little when real power in Germany was coming to rest with the territorial princes.

After Louis' death in 1347 his rival Charles of Luxemburg was universally recognised as King of Germany; he was crowned emperor in 1355 and agreed that he would never interfere in Italian affairs. This gave him freedom to settle the situation inside Germany. The next year he laid down procedure for the election of the German king so as to exclude papal interference.

The outbreak of the Great Schism

By 1376 the situation in Rome and the surrounding district was sufficiently peaceful for Gregory XI to return. On his death two years later, however, the papacy, which had survived two external crises, was faced with an internal one. The Archbishop of Bari was elected pope amid the demonstrations of the people of Rome and took the name Urban VI (1378–1389). His career had until then been undistinguished. It was assumed that he would allow the cardinals a large part of the framing of papal policy, as had been usual under the Avignonese papacy. In 1353 the cardinals had made an electoral pact which bound the next pope to associate the cardinals in the major decisions of government; similar pacts were made during subsequent vacancies. The cardinals were claiming a share in the fullness of power enjoyed by the papacy. Their claims had some support in canon law and were reinforced by the growth of papal government, which gave the cardinals increased responsibility and power. The pope's freedom of action was beginning to be restricted by his own administration.

Urban VI, however, refused to have papal



authority diminished by the claims of the cardinals. The cardinals, therefore, decided, that he was not fitted for the papal office; in the summer of 1378, using the excuse that they had chosen him under duress, they proceeded to elect one of their number, Pope Clement VII (1378–1394).

In its origins the schism was a purely internal affair connected with the problem of how an unworthy pope was to be removed. But it was complicated and made much more difficult to resolve by the political situation: the Hundred Years' War had divided Europe into two power blocks. Even though France and the Iberian kingdoms made a show of examining the credentials of the rival popes, there can be no doubt that allegiances were determined by predominantly political

A meeting between the emperor Charles IV (1347-1378) and the French king, Charles V (1364-1380). The emperor was received at Paris in 1377 with great pomp. This rapprochement between France and the empire was soon to be undermined by the Great Schism (1378), which split Europe into two hostile camps. France supported the Avignonese papacy; the Empire came down on the side of the Roman pontiff. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

motives. England and its allies supported Urban VI, while France and its allies recognised Clement VII, who took up residence at Avignon.

The conciliar movement

The schism might have its political advantages, but these were outweighed by a consciousness that a terrible scandal had been perpetrated which threatened the whole fabric of the Church.

But how could it be solved? Neither pope would willingly renounce his claims, and they became still more firmly entrenched once they had set up their rival administrative machines. Nor was there any body that clearly had the right to sit in judgement over the two popes. Furthermore it was not just a matter of settling the schism: it became increasingly clear that any solution involved the whole question of authority within the Church. In other words the ending of the schism seemed likely to entail the structural reform of the Church.

The 'conciliar movement' was essentially an attempt to meet this difficult problem. It did not provide a coherent system of Church government, but within it one can detect two distinct strands which corresponded to different concepts of the Church. On the one hand, there were the cardinals who claimed that resolving the schism was properly their duty; for they argued that power within the Church resided in a corporation consisting of the college of cardinals with the pope as its head, and that as a result the pope was responsible to the college. On the other hand, there was a wider body of conciliarist or church council opinion. While admitting that the pope was head of the whole Christian community, it held that sovereignty lay not with the pope alone, but with the whole Christian people; the latter was represented by the general council to which the pope was subordinate. This body was to be responsible for reforming the Church and ending the schism. The one represented an oligarchic view of the Church; the other a democratic one. The history of the conciliar movement is very much the interaction of these two strands.

The Avignonese cardinals were determined to impose their own solution. They had the backing of the French government, which canvassed the possibility of simultaneous withdrawal of obedience by supporters of both popes. In 1398 the French implemented their part of the scheme, but this method of forcing both popes to resign —thus allowing the cardinals to end the schism by electing a new pope—failed because supporters of the Roman pope refused to follow the French lead. The cardinals next tried to arrange a meeting between the rival popes to secure their abdication. This plan was sabotaged by the natural reluctance of the Roman pope.

Dissident cardinals of both obediences then called a general council to meet at Pisa in 1409. Both popes were deposed, and a new one elected. This attempt on the part of the cardinals to put themselves at the head of the ever growing support for a general council was doomed to failure for they had no intention of carrying out conciliarist reforms. They were unable to implement their sentences of deposition, and there were now three popes instead of two.

The Council of Constance

A general council meeting to reform the Church now seemed the only hope. The cry for reform grew louder. On the one hand, there were those like Hus in Bohemia who were disillusioned with the established Church; on the other, there was a more orthodox body of opinion that called for reform because they saw in the work of Hus and Wycliffe a threat to established order.

Reform of the Church was to be the theme of the council that assembled at Constance in 1414, but the actual outcome turned very much on the political interests of the rulers of Christendom. The council was called by the Pisan Pope John XXIII, but under pressure from the German King Sigismund, who was to be its moving force. Sigismund was not inspired by conciliarist ideals, though his desire for reform was genuine enough, if a little vague. His main interest in the council was political. He calculated that, if he could help to bring the schism to an end, he would become the leading prince in Christendom and in a position to overawe the papacy. This newfound power would then enable him to reassert imperial authority in Germany. He was to be disappointed.

Nevertheless, much that the council achieved was due to him. Thanks to his energy and presence of mind, John XXIII was deposed, the Roman pontiff was forced to abdicate, and the Avignonese pope deprived of any secular backing. The question now before the council was whether to proceed to a general reform of the Church or to elect a new pope first.

After the pattern of the universities, voting at the council was by nations. The English and German nations were for reform. The French, Italian and Spanish nations, supported by the majority of cardinals, determined on election first. The deadlock was broken when, for purely political reasons, the English delegation gave up its insistence on reform. A compromise was reached. A decree *Frequens* was issued laying down regular meetings of the general council, to which, it was asserted, everyone, including the pope, was subjected and from which there was no appeal. These enactments were thought to be a guarantee that the work of reform would go on. The council then elected pope Martin V.

Victory for papal monarchy

The council of Constance that had promised so much, achieved precious little save the ending of the schism. No new structure of Church government came into being. On the contrary, it soon became clear that the papacy would re-emerge with its old authority virtually intact. Even before the council broke up, Martin V had prohibited appeals from the pope to a general council in matters of faith. Doubt arose on the validity of the decree which claimed that the pope was responsible to the council, because Martin V did not specifically confirm it. After his return to Rome he turned his energies to restoring control over the Papal States.

Martin V and his successor Eugenius IV were not opposed to the councils in themselves, and faithfully carried out the provisions laid down in the decree *Frequens*, but they were determined that the councils should remain under papal control.

The internal contradictions of the conciliar movement soon became apparent. The council of Basle that met in 1431 could do little more than defy Eugenius IV's attempts to dissolve it; there were quarrels about which was the right approach to the reform of the Church. Should it concentrate on the papal administration or should it begin from below? Most of the higher clergy gradually deserted the council to join Eugenius IV. Although in 1439 the council proclaimed its superiority over the papacy, it was clear that it offered no real alternative to papal monarchy; for the representatives at Basle were frightened of the democratic principles on which conciliar theory was based. The laity were not allowed any real part in their deliberations and decisions. The council acted less as the representative of the Church than as a body standing above society by virtue of divine authority.

There is another side to the restoration of papal monarchy. The alliance with the princes of Christendom was resumed. The papacy needed their support in the struggle with the conciliarists. But the compromise with secular power now went further than it had under the Avignonese papacy. The popes were forced to accede to the increasing royal control over the Church which had been won during the schism.

The policy of compromise with established order initiated under the Avignonese papacy at least preserved the outward forms of papal monarchy, but it was now deprived of much of its spiritual content. Disillusion with the papacy continued to grow; it seemed to be an obstacle to any reform of the Church. This was now destined to take place outside papal control. On the other hand, the compromise with the princes meant that they would be enabled to have a very large say in the shape which reform was to take in their dominions.

Clerks, scholars and heretics

The growing power of the clergy; the new universities; heresies are stamped out; St Francis and the revolutionary friars; the radical doctrines of Hus and Wycliffe; philosophers argue about reason and faith; Aristotle and Aquinas: the personal voice in religion.

'Doubtless good works are better than great knowledge, but without knowledge it is impossible to do good.' The famous words with which Charlemagne (in a capitulary written shortly before 800) announced his own educational policy, still provide the fundamental guide to the patterns of thought in western Europe between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. The central assumption that all branches of intellectual activity should be centred on God and subserve Christ's purposes is difficult if not impossible to recapture in a more modern and less religious age. But the world of medieval learning is unintelligible except in terms of a concerted attempt to 'justify the ways of God to man'. Indeed the history of thought between 1000 and 1500 is best interpreted as the most ambitious, sophisticated and sustained effort ever made by human reason to comprehend a divinity which was by definition never completely capable of human comprehension.

This paradox was one of which medieval thinkers were themselves only too frequently and painfully aware. St Bernard, St Francis and many others expressed grave doubts as to the validity of conclusions based on rational enquiry; and even Abelard, arguably the most significant figure in the movement towards uninhibited speculative thought, faced the same dilemma. In the celebrated words of his letter to Héloise after his condemnation in 1141, 'I will never be a philosopher, if that is to speak against St Paul: I would not be an Aristotle, if that

The world of Islam presented medieval Christendom with its greatest political challenge and its most fruitful intellectual stimulus. The influence of Islamic philosophy and its transmission of Aristotelian texts reached a climax in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, many years before this miniature was produced to illustrate a late medieval Arabic manuscript. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

were to separate me from Christ.' It was probably inevitable that this basic conflict between faith and reason should lead not to a long history of intellectual heresy but to the late medieval disintegration of the previous attempt to synthesise human knowledge under the aegis of the divine. But it is even more important to realise that the contrast between human reason and Christ's grace provided the inner tension and dynamic behind the greatest achievements, as well as the greatest failures of the medieval intellect.

The new learning and the new law

The decades immediately before and after A.D. 1100 have long been recognised as a period which marks a genuine revolution in the history of western Europe. As in the case of its fifteenth-century Italian counterpart, the true nature of the so-called 'Twelfth-century Renaissance' has been obscured rather than clarified by its now conventional title. This was fundamentally a new age, characterised by its willingness to adapt the teachings of the early Christian Fathers and eventually of Aristotle to its own purposes.

A complex series of powerful social and economic forces, provided an environment within which a rapid expansion of a new

The intense ritualism which surrounded so many aspects of public life in medieval Europe is vividly expressed in the illustrations which accompany the Coutumes de Toulouse. *In theory the penalties for offences against the Christian and moral law were often extravagantly severe. In the illustration below an adulterer is solemnly conducted to the stake. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

kind of learning could develop. The liberation of western Europe from the dangers of Viking, Muslim or Magyar invasion, the restoration of a degree of civil peace and social order, the revival of trade and communications, the dramatic growth of urban activity and of population itself, set the intellectual stage but did not determine the nature and quality of the drama.

The genuinely characteristic feature of twelfth-century intellectual activity, as perhaps of medieval society as a whole, was an attempt by the clerical estate, widely regarded as God's representatives upon earth, to maintain and define their special position in society. Members of the priesthood, under the leadership of bishops, metropolitans and the pope, formed a clerical élite but not an absolute theocracy. And it was the need to resolve the ambiguities of their role—in this world but not entirely of it—which provided both the social and intellectual mainspring of the new order.

The eleventh century saw the first massive and sustained attempt by the clergy, under the undisputed direction of the papacy after the reign of Gregory VII (1073–1085), to claim an absolutely distinctive place against that of the laity. The ambitious and ultimately remarkably successful reform programme of the Church, its attack on clerical marriage, its denunciation of simony and insistence on clerical celibacy, was specifically aimed at differentiating the clerk from the layman.

Inevitably this movement led to a new and more violent phase in the already vexed and complex history of the relationship between spiritual and secular authority. The Investiture Controversy between the German king, Henry IV, and the Roman papacy under Gregory VII and his immediate successors began a conflict which was certainly not ended by the Concordat of Worms in 1122. On the assumption, made by St Augustine and commonly accepted throughout the middle ages, that both pope and emperor—and, by implication, all kings and all priests—were agents of divine authority, the precise limits of their rival claims to obedience was always a matter of practical concern and often of spiritual urgency.

The fundamental issues thus raised by the Investiture Controversy compelled its protagonists to become articulate. Resist-

Further illustrations from the Coutumes de Toulouse *emphasise the savagery of legal sentences and punishments designed to exercise a deterrent effect in a still largely barbaric world. The use of the pillory for minor offences long survived the middle ages. More quick to disappear was the early medieval assumption that mutilation (the amputation of the hand of a notorious thief as seen far right) was a more appropriate penalty than capital punishment. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

ance to the pope or emperor, opposition to a Henry II or a Becket, had to be justified and rationalised. Theologians, philosophers and political theorists have rarely been offered so exciting an opportunity to contribute towards a public debate. The collision between the spiritual and temporal powers at the end of the eleventh century led to an almost instantaneous outburst of controversial literature. For the first time for centuries there was a concerted attempt to analyse and re-define the theoretical concepts which underlay the ordering of society: the nature of law and of right, the source and limitations of authority. These enquiries stimulated in their train an even more searching theological and philosophical investigation into the process of human knowledge itself.

In the first place, however, the Investiture Controversy provoked an intensive interest in the study of the law. From the beginning the papacy's assertion of supremacy over its lay rivals had been founded within a framework of jurisprudence. The appeal to legal precedents or Church authorities was the Church's most familiar method of argument and exhortation: it can be seen at a relatively crude and embryonic stage in Gregory VII's famous *Dictatus Papae* of 1075, which included the explicit claim that a pope could depose an emperor. Such extremism rapidly provoked a reaction from the lay party. As early as the ten-eighties Peter Crassus of Ravenna, himself a layman, was invoking Roman civil law and assisting in the contemporary rediscovery of Justinian's great legal codes. In the first years of the twelfth century, the University of Bologna not only replaced Pavia and Ravenna as the main centre of legal studies in Italy but was itself centred upon the lay schools of Roman law.

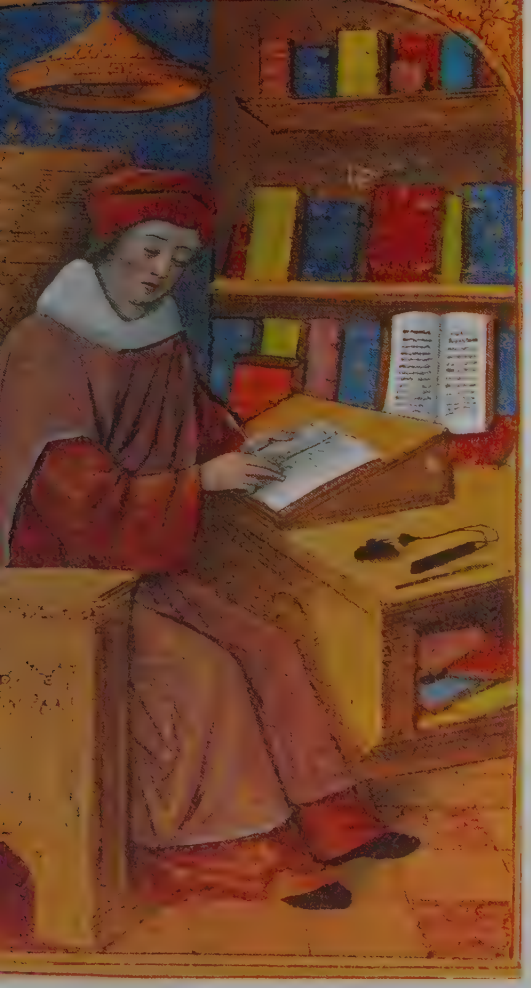
Lay participation in legal and medical studies within the Italian universities remained one of their important characteristics—largely because Italian towns, unlike most of those north of the Alps, possessed a semi-professional class of literate lawyers and notaries with a practical interest in technical training. But even in Italy it was the clergy who reaped the most startling fruits from the resurgence of learning and controversy. Throughout the middle ages the spokesmen for the lay or, more accurately, imperialist cause tended to be clerks rather than laymen—as did those, like the Englishman John of Salisbury (c. 1115–1180), who attempted to produce a sophisticated reconciliation between the claims of the rival authorities.

At Bologna itself legal studies were rapidly dominated by the work of the ecclesiastical canonists. Master Gratian of Bologna regarded Roman law with suspicion; and his *Concordia Discordantium Canonum*, compiled by about 1140, provided both the essential legal sources and the textbook for the universalist Church. Gratian's work was almost immediately adopted in the schools as the basis for the study of all canon law. It owed much of its success to the author's ability to rationalise —along the lines being pioneered in theological studies within northern France—as well as to collect canonical texts. It is no exaggeration to state that Gratian not only made canon law a workable discipline but ensured that *Bolonia docta*, the 'mother of scholars', would retain its European primacy in legal studies. The practical as well as intellectual implications of this development need no urging. In 1159 one of Gratian's most ardent disciples and pupils. Master Roland Bandinelli, became Pope Alexander

III: the era of the great lawyer-popes had dawned and with it the firm establishment of a Church that was legally corporate and catholic as well as holy and apostolic.

It can be no coincidence that these developments in the legal status and teaching of the Church coincided with a general trend towards corporate activity throughout western Europe. The twelfth century was indeed the golden age of medieval ecclesiastical corporations as well as their secular counterparts. The partial restoration of civil peace encouraged political and social organisation at a local level in a period when the 'state' as such was physically incapable of meeting the needs and aspirations of its nominal subjects. In Italy, the Low Countries, Germany, France and even England important towns successfully fought their way towards the corporate self-government of a 'commune'. Similarly the great secular cathedrals of western Europe, often centres of advanced learning, as were the monasteries, secured a large measure of practical freedom from the intervention of their local bishop. The early history of the new medieval European universities of northern Europe (and especially of their most important archetype, Paris) as they emerged towards the end of the century, reflected the operation of exactly the same social forces. It is symbolically appropriate that the *studium generale*, to use the technical term, employed

The chivalric concept of the relationship between clerk and layman emerges clearly from these two late medieval manuscripts at the Bibliothèque Nationale. The clerks expounded and interpreted the text before handing over the finished volume for the education of the secular prince. In an age of relatively small and dispersed libraries the book as an artefact still enjoyed a symbolic value out of proportion to its contents.



in the middle ages to denote a place of study where at least one of the subjects of the faculties of theology, medicine and law were taught, should finally come to be known as the *universitas* or corporation. The new universities of Paris, Oxford and Cambridge might even be interpreted as microcosms of the Church as a whole: on the intellectual level they expressed not only its universalist claims but the ideal of an articulate, self-critical and self-conscious clerical estate.

Faith and reason in the twelfth century

The intellectual activity within the new universities was, like the institutional form those universities took, latent in the developments of the previous century. The trend towards a greater sense of cohesion and common purpose was as evident in the one sphere as the other. Before 1200, the most ingenious and daring speculative thinkers wrote, like St Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033–1109), St Bernard (1090–1153) and Peter Abelard (1079–1142), with a markedly individual tone and spirit. Unlike each other in almost every respect, these three famous figures were all typical of the pre-university age. They were still the masters and not the servants of the very logical skills and academic techniques they helped to promote. By the end of the century individual philosophers and theologians, as well as lawyers were beginning to seem less important than the movement within which they took their place. Scholasticism was in process of becoming, for good or ill, more important than the scholar.

To a very large extent the process by which intellectual enquiry (and eventually university syllabuses) came to centre on a relatively small body of universally accepted subject matter was dictated by the very nature of the source material available. The texts available to twelfth-century scholars, the Bible, the early Fathers, St Augustine, were theoretically guides to the whole range of human thought—especially when supplemented by the contemporary influx of Islamic ideas and interpretations of classical works via Spain and Sicily. But the transmission and copying of books was a slow and expensive business. Few scholars, even in a big cathedral school or university, had a large library at their personal disposal. More often than is easy to imagine in the modern world, such practical limitations controlled the development of a scholar's thought.

The most obvious solution to these problems was the provision of large quantities of one common textbook, which accordingly then became extremely influential—often beyond its merits. Gratian's *Concordia* is an example of a supremely successful as well as popular manual. Its theological counterpart is the *Four Books of the Sentences*, written in the early eleven-fifties by Peter the Lombard, educated at Bologna and Reims and a teacher in the cathedral school of Paris from 1140 until his death twenty years later. Peter's systematic compilation of questions from the Bible and patristic authorites (especially St Augustine) did more than any other single work to determine the aims and principles of scholastic thought for the next two centuries.

But it was the technique rather than the content of Lombard's *Sentences* which gave it such exceptional impact. It was a triumphant demonstration of the impressive results to be gained by applying logical techniques to an apparently discordant and intractable series of authorities.

The emergence in the last half of the twelfth century of the mature critic was the result of a long and arduous process of technical enquiry. Ivo of Chartres (1040–1117) had directed attention to the need to group texts intelligibly; it was probably under the influence of the canonists that in his *Sic et Non* of about 1122 Abelard took the essential step of providing a carefully planned proof that 'careful and frequent questioning is the basic key to wisdom' and that 'by doubting we come to questioning, and by questioning we perceive the truth'.

Never a rationalist but always a logician, Abelard's immense influence on philosophical and theological study was not seriously undermined by the personal tragedy and ecclesiastical censure of his last years. With his attack on the Platonic concepts of Forms or Ideas ('the universal is a mere vocal sound' or at most a 'mental image'), Abelard liberated philosophy from the very real danger of a descent into a wilderness of confused metaphysics.

So was inaugurated one of the world's greatest debates. Twelfth-century learning left no greater legacy to the future than the belief that it was the Church's duty to reconcile, or at least try to do so, the miraculous workings of God's grace with the rational speculation of the human mind. This fundamental issue was not of course an entirely new one; but it was during the age of Abelard and his successors that it came to dominate the intellectual scene. The developing skills and sophistication of the scholar, together with an increasing view of the divinity in human forms, gave the issue an urgency it had previously lacked. Before the twelfth century theology as a discipline can hardly be said to have existed, except in the limited sense that it justified the obvious —man's enslavement to the Devil and need for redemption by an all powerful and inscrutable divinity. But the new emphasis on Christ himself, on God made Man (more fundamental to the 'humanism' of the twelfth century than its interest in classical authors), gave grounds for a more optimistic enquiry into the nature of the Godhead.

Such optimism is already apparent in the writings of St Anselm of Canterbury. Anselm's famous assertions that 'he believed in order that he might understand' ('*Credo ut intelligam*') and that faith sought understanding ('*fides quarens intellectum*') had been shared by St Augustine. But in his famous study of the Atonement, the *Cur Deus Homo?* of about 1097, Anselm laid a novel emphasis upon the humanity of God as Man. During the next 200 years this new doctrine had exhilarating effects. If God was man he would accept and approve all men's attempts to understand him.

This belief seems central to Abelard's life as well as his writings: it accounts for his readiness to embark upon the dangerous passages of intellectual adventure. Several of Abelard's opinions were condemned at the Council of Sens in 1141 through the influence of St Bernard, who wrongly believed that 'this most excellent doctor prefers free will at the expense of grace'. But the spirit in which Abelard conducted his logical investigations long survived his personal downfall. The view that Christ could be directly comprehended through the scope of human intellect or emotion is the common denominator among such various movements of the late twelfth century as the extension of heresy, the emergence of the friars and the passion for academic and eventually university learning.

The problem of heresy

The social and intellectual ferment of the twelfth century consolidated the theoretical supremacy of the Church at the cost of presenting it with its most explicit challenge.

Left: by the end of the middle ages all medieval universities had abandoned their original informality and developed distinctive rules, regulations and public rituals. The mace had become—what in universities like Oxford and St Andrews it still remains—the visible symbol of university and collegiate authority. Below: A professor and his students. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

In the year A.D. 1000, organised heresy, as opposed to pagan survivals and individual eccentricity, seems to have been virtually non-existent in Latin Europe. By 1200 heresy was not only relatively common but potentially dangerous. It is now difficult and perhaps impossible to make an exact assessment of the severity of this threat to the existence and cohesion of the Church. What is clear is that successive popes and members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy considered the danger to be very great indeed. The need to combat and suppress heresy added a note of urgency to the work of scholars and theologians. It also came to condition the general outlook of the Church as a whole—with ultimately disastrous effects.

The central paradox of twelfth-century heretical movements was that they shared many of the assumptions and ideals of the Church reformers themselves. Heresy rarely took the form of a frontal attack on the institutions of the Church as such, and was generally impelled by an intense devotion rather than hostility to the moral tenets of Christian belief. Like the founders of the new monastic orders, the early heretics were almost all inspired by a desire to return to the primitive purity of the communal life led by Christ and his apostles. Peter de Bruys (died c. 1140), a dissident priest who preached

the rejection of the sacraments in Dauphiné and Provence, shared St Bernard's own distaste for the wealth, pomp and circumstance of the contemporary Church. Moreover, every attempt made by prelates, canonists or theologians to exalt and justify the Church as God's visible community on earth made the discrepancy between ideal and actual more apparent.

The chronological development of medieval heresy was, accordingly, closely related to the extension of ecclesiastical power and influence throughout western Europe. Only after the middle of the twelfth century did a hitherto diverse series of unorthodox doctrines crystallise into organnised sects and communities—at exactly the time that orthodox schools of thought were solidifying into coherent academic and university disciplines. Before that date, the history of heresy, like that of all abstract learning, had tended to consist of a series of isolated individuals, sometimes able to attract a group of disciples, but rarely able to promote a general movement.

Nevertheless, even in this early period heretical opinions had to be condemned, however academic and esoteric they might appear. St Bernard took considerable pains to combat the ingenious if perverse distinction drawn by Gilbert de la Porrée (1076–1154) between the 'essence' and 'substance' of the divine. But neither Gilbert de la Porrée, nor his contemporary Abelard, nor Berengar of Tours, excommunicated in 1050 for his unorthodox conception of the Eucharist, held opinions likely to provide the mainspring of popular heresy. Arnold of Brescia (died 1155) owed his mob support in Rome and other Italian towns not to his doctrinal heresies (according to tradition he was a pupil of Abelard at Paris), but to a violent attack on clerical property.

Much more menacing was the rapid growth, in the years that followed Arnold of Brescia's execution, of the sect whose members called themselves the Cathari, the 'Pure'. Known in southern France as the Albigenses because of their centre at the city of Albi in the department of Tarn, the Cathari owed much of their evangelical success to the practical argument that they attained a higher standard of morality than the established priesthood. What made this heresy particularly dangerous and indeed unique was its combination of well-defined and revolutionary doctrine with a sophisticated organisation.

Although twelfth-century Catharism remains a mysterious movement because the

These fifteenth century illustrations reveal the type of medical treatment that was then available to a very small minority of the European population. The University of Montpellier replaced Salerno as the foremost centre of medical studies; but continued to treat Galen, Hippocrates and, inevitably, Aristotle as the primary authorities. Wine and spices formed the basis of the more reliable mendicaments; but great confidence was usually placed in the curative effects of bleeding and, much more dangerously, of trepanning (boring holes in the patient). Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

The disputation, supervised by a master who added his personal interpretation at the conclusion of the debate, was the traditional instrument of higher university education and examination—the concrete expression of scholastic obsession with the dialectic. Doctrinal heresy might develop from this background, in which case delivery of the heretic to the lay power and his subsequent burning at the stake was the ultimate penalty. Coutumes de Toulouse. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

surviving evidence usually compels us to see it through the eyes of its Christian persecutors, certain themes emerge quite clearly. Catharist teaching was based on a form of Manichaean dualism apparently synthesised in the Byzantine Empire and especially by the Bogomil sect in Bulgaria: its stark antithesis between the eternal principles of good and evil appealed on intellectual grounds to the learned as well as emotionally to the ill-educated or illiterate lesser clergy and urban poor of northern Italy and southern France. Above all, members of the Cathari derived cohesion and strength from their belief that they were members of an exclusive sect: both its leaders, the *perfecti*, and the much larger group of ordinary believers, the *credentes*, could hope to die in purity and be assured of an everlasting life in paradise.

So attractive a creed won the sympathetic interest and eventually the support of many nobles in southern France, an area which had not previously experienced the full weight of orthodox Christian reform movements. By the close of the twelfth century the Albigensian heresy in the Midi could no longer be contained by the local agencies of the Church. Fortunately for the papacy, the Albigenses flouted the social and political as

The earliest generations of students at the Universities of Paris and Oxford made their own informal arrangements to secure lodgings and food. But the needs of a minority of the impoverished students were gradually met by the establishment of halls and colleges. Most famous of all was that founded at Paris by Robert de Sorbon, confessor of St Louis. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

well as the religious conventions of the age. When in 1208 Innocent III preached a crusade against the heretics after the murder of his legate at the court of Raymond VI, count of Toulouse, he unleashed the territorial appetites of the northern French nobility. After the battle of Muret in 1213 Catharism everywhere, and not just in the Midi, was forced on to the defensive and gradually died out.

But the experience of the Albigensian heresy left a permanently adverse legacy to the organised Church. The papacy allowed itself to be forced, initially against its will, into the belief that all proposals for radical reform of the clergy were dangerous. The popes' fears that they might lose their spiritual leadership led them to proclaim as heretical movements which, at the beginning of the eleventh century, would have been legitimised and incorporated within the Church. The career of Peter Valdès or Waldo (died 1217) provides the classic example of this process.

Waldo, a rich merchant of Lyons, was, according to a familiar medieval tradition, so moved by the words of Matthew xix, 21, that he distributed his money to the poor and adopted the life of a mission-preacher and mendicant. His followers, the Waldenses or *Vaudois*, initially settled in communities on the French side of the Alps and appealed in vain for ecclesiastical recognition at the third Lateran Council in 1179. Five years later Pope Lucius III placed the Waldenses under the ban, and they were compelled to elaborate their own primitive ministry and moral code. Only after Innocent III instituted a crusade against them in 1209 did they come to attack the papacy as anti-Christ and condemn themselves to a centuries-long endurance of sustained but never completely successful persecution.

Against the background of the Albigensian heresy it is understandable that the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 should have required bishops to hunt out and bring to justice all persons suspected of heresy. More questionable was Pope Gregory IX's decision in 1233 to entrust the friars with independent authority to try and sentence proved heretics in southern France. The delegation of the work of combating heresy to local agencies and secular governments was administratively convenient but deprived the papacy of effective control over inquisitorial methods and procedures. In the long term a growing inflexibility of attitude at all levels of the organised Church helped to force both the idealists and the discontented to look outside the ecclesiastical hierarchy for their spiritual values. The danger would have been much more immediate had it not been for the startling emergence of the friars—and the papacy's decision, after much hesitation and doubt, to admit them within the confines of the Church.

The coming of the friars

'And as ye go, preach, saying, The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, not script for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.' (*Matthew*, x, 7–10).

These words, interpreted by St Francis (1182–1226) as a personal call when he heard them read in the church of the Portiuncula two miles below Assisi one morning in or about 1208, lie at the heart of the extraordinary success of the new mendicant orders in thirteenth-century Europe. There is no doubt that St Francis and his Order were the single biggest factor in reawakening primitive Christian faith during the years after the 1215 Lateran Council. By forging a link between clergy and laity, the Franciscan and to a lesser extent the Dominican, Carmelite and Augustinian friars helped to save the organised Church from indifference and contempt. They postponed, and this is their most significant historical achievement, the slow disintegration of the universalist Church for at least one and possibly several generations.

The mendicant orders (living entirely on alms) of the early thirteenth century were a genuinely revolutionary force eventually compelled to subserve conservative ends. St Francis himself stands quite apart from all the other founders of religious orders within the Catholic Church. Unlike Saints Benedict and Bernard before him or Teresa and Ignatius Loyola at a later period, he was both unable and deliberately unwilling to provide a code of moral and public conduct by which his followers should live. At a period when the development of the Church was characterised by the extension of legal and administrative procedures, St Francis's refusal to codify his principles or organise his disciples stands out in stark contrast.

This refusal owed its roots to two deeply felt conclusions. The only necessary guide to a perfect human existence was Christ's own life; for that reason obedience might be withheld from any command which ran contrary to each individual's personal conception of spiritual perfection. In the words of the first Franciscan rule, later modified, the *Regula Prima* of 1221, 'If any official orders a brother to do something against our life and his own soul, the latter shall not be obliged to obey'. Secondly, it was a fundamental feature of St Francis's message that he addressed—on Christ's behalf—all inhabitants of Christendom and indeed the earth. In his own words, 'I tell you truly that the Lord has chosen and sent out friars for the profit and salvation of all men in this world'. No religious reformer or leader has ever preached a less exclusive creed.

The early mendicants were therefore sharply divided from previous reforming movements within the Church, all of which had been intent upon the creation of a saintly and usually contemplative élite. If the first Franciscans and Dominicans have any ancestors, they must be sought within the ranks of twelfth-century heretics rather than among the monastic orders. The intriguing analogies between the careers of Peter Waldo of Lyons and his contemporary Francis of Assisi have often been noticed. Like Waldo, St Francis came from a wealthy urban background and renounced the secular life in order to become a hermit. His personal experience of penury not only taught him the religious rewards of poverty but enabled him to appeal to the poor in northern Italian towns. Very little can be known for certain about the social origins of the first generation of Franciscan friars; but it seems very likely that they drew their recruits from a much lower level of society than the contemporary monastery or nunnery.

More important still, the mendicants deliberately addressed and cultivated a religious audience among the urban middle-class and working-class, groups whose spiritual needs had never been fully met by the monastic orders nor even—as far as we can tell—by their parish clergy. Many of the latter were widely criticised, probably with justice, for their neglect of preaching duties. Accordingly, the friars' success in establishing themselves within the town environment was immediate and remarkable. In Venice the two enormous brick churches of the Franciscans and Dominicans, the Frari and SS. Giovanni e Paulo, still tower above the numerous other Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque churches within the city.

Apostolic poverty, with its implied rebuke for the life being currently led by the higher clergy, had consequently a practical as well as doctrinal significance for the history of the mendicants. From the very early days of the movement it was predictable that this issue would raise great controversy within as well as without the Order. When in 1323 Pope John XXII finally condemned the traditional Franciscan thesis that the poverty of Christ and the apostles was absolute, he did so only at the cost of antagonising many of the more ascetic 'spirituals', who established small communities of *fraticelli*, especially in the hills of southern Italy. A century earlier apostolic poverty had in fact been crucial to the Franciscans' evangelical success, for it made movement from town to town economically essential as well as spiritually desirable.

The mobility of the first members of the mendicant orders is startling even by modern standards. Within six weeks of their landing at Dover on 10 September 1224 (four days before St Francis himself received the stigmata on Monte Alverna), the first small group of Franciscans to reach England had established three important settlements at

Above: this particular French variant of the characteristic medieval world map or mappa mundi *places Rome near the centre of the circle. The island of England (*Anglia*) can be seen in the bottom left and India at the extreme right. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*
Right: one of the unique drawings made by the thirteenth-century architectural expert, Villard de Honnecourt, lays bare the structural merits of the flying buttress, a classic hallmark of the fully developed French Gothic style.

The invention of printing together with that of gunpowder and the mariner's compass 'changed the appearance and form of things throughout the world'. Soon after 1450 *the arduous experiments of John Gutenberg (*c. 1390–1468*) culminated in the great '*42*-line' Mainz Bible, the first book printed with movable metal type. The printing-press, which was established in Rome by* 1467, *Paris by* 1470 *and Westminster by* 1476, *had a rapid success—largely because of the growing popular demand for works of devotion and chivalric romance. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Canterbury, London and Oxford. St Francis's own two most ambitious preaching tours—to southern France and Spain in 1214–1215 and to eastern Europe and Egypt in 1219—seem to have been conducted at breakneck speed. The friars' ability to carry both the faith and diplomatic messages over vast distances remained one of their most spectacular characteristics; Carpini, the Franciscan head of a mission sent by Innocent IV to the Mongols between 1245 and 1247, is said to have travelled 3,000 miles in 106 days—a feat which is both physically more impressive and historically more significant than Marco Polo's more famous journey a generation later.

It was within rather than outside Christendom that the itinerant preaching of the early friars had its most profound effect. As early as 1256 there were 1,242 Franciscan friars in the English provinces dispersed among forty-nine houses sited in the largest cathedral and county towns. By this date, however, general mobility on the part of the rank and file of the mendicant orders was already on the wane. Though the itinerant ideal survived and the friars were never restricted like the monks by an oath of *stabilitas loci* (literally 'stay in one locality') it was a feature of their extraordinary expansion that they should become increasingly preoccupied with financial and administrative concerns. Similar pressures were forced upon the friars by the papacy itself. Although Innocent III tentatively supported the principles advocated by the early friars, and later popes gave them formal approval and took them under their personal protection and authority, they insisted in return that the new orders should have a series of official rules and some form of internal disciplinary organisation.

The gradual transition from radical idealism to institutional conservatism was as familiar and disillusioning a process in the middle ages as it is today: but by their very nature the friars were exposed to particularly scathing criticism on these grounds. Before the end of the thirteenth century the mendicants were already beginning to assume their conventional role in the popular and literary imagination of the later middle ages: they were the predestined scapegoats for the sins of all the clergy as well as their own.

Equally remarkable although more understandable was the rapid evolution of a mass evangelical movement into an élite of literate intelligent people. Among the renunciations which St Francis had required from his disciples was that of all human learning. A strong and often explicit anti-intellectual tendency is as evident in the early Franciscans of North Italy as in contemporary heretical sects. But even before Francis's death in 1226, his own Order was gravitating towards the universities. All successful evangelism requires a modicum of intellectual argument: evangelism against a background of organised heresy demands mental subtlety and learning as well. This was a lesson learnt by the Spaniard St Dominic (1170–1222) during his ten years' mission among the Albigenses of Languedoc. His Order of Friars Preachers, which held its first general chapter at Bologna in the year before Dominic's death, was specifically directed at combating heresy by means of the spoken word and eloquent sermon. Both the need for technical training and the fear, probably misplaced, of a revival of influential academic heresy drove the Dominicans and Franciscans towards the universities—above all to the universities of Paris and Oxford.

Above: the installation of Pope Clement V at Avignon in 1309 *inaugurated the seventy-years long 'captivity', a period during which the papacy actually retained its independence and elaborated its administrative machinery but forfeited the respect of many members of both clergy and laity. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*
Right: Clement VI, pope from 1342 *to* 1352 *(the portrait dates from a much later period), was a notable theologian and a staunch defender of the mendicant orders. But the latter had already begun to lose the prestige they had enjoyed a century earlier when they won the esteem of St Louis.*

The universities in the thirteenth century

The Dominican friars arrived at Paris in 1217 and the Franciscans two years later. Both orders were intent on founding schools for their own members, the most talented of whom were soon to be enrolled for degrees in the theological faculty of the university. They could hardly have chosen a more auspicious moment. In 1215 a papal legate had at last recognised the right of the *studium generale* of Paris to make statutes of its own: the tortuous process by which the cathedral school of Notre Dame evolved into a self-governing university corporation was almost complete. For the next two centuries this greatest of the 'masters' universities' was to be the dominant centre of logical, metaphysical and theological studies within western Europe.

Not, of course, that Paris, at which surprisingly few of the outstanding teachers were ever Frenchmen, enjoyed a complete monopoly of higher learning. The origins of the university at Oxford, where Robert Pullen had been lecturing in theology as early as 1133, are even more mysterious than those of Paris; but in 1214 the schools there acquired not only corporate recognition by the papacy but a chancellor, deriving his authority from the Bishop of Lincoln although soon to become the elected master of the schools. Oxford was in part spared the long and bitter struggle for independence from the claims of ordinary ecclesiastical authority experienced at Paris. The early history of its intellectual activity too tended to be more tranquil, more liberal and less strained by political and personal rivalries.

Throughout the early thirteenth century the University of Cambridge, which seems to have owed its establishment to a migration of dispersed Oxford students in 1209, tended to exist in the shadow of England's first university. But by the lifetime of Robert Holcot (c. 1300–1349), a Dominican teacher deeply influenced by William of Ockham, Cambridge had developed a genuinely distinctive approach to theological and philosophical problems and its reputation already rivalled that of Oxford.

In southern Europe the early thirteenth century was a period of more dramatic expansion in the number of universities. Within Italy, Bologna continued to tower above its rivals, and its three most characteristic features—lay participation, the primacy of legal studies, and the constitutional subordination of the teaching masters to the student 'nations' and their rectors—proved the dominating influences. The Universities of Vicenza (1204) and Padua (1222) were in fact the products of student migrations from Bologna. Naples, founded by Frederick II in 1224, as well as the early Spanish Universities of Palencia (c. 1208), Salamanca (c. 1220) and Valladolid (c. 1250), were more artificial creations, promoted and sponsored for political and bureaucratic purposes by a secular prince. All were modelled on the Bolognese rather than the Parisian pattern and all concentrated upon the study of law.

The new French universities of this period, Angers (1229), Toulouse (founded by papal bull in 1229), and Orleans (1235), were also most famous for their provision of a technical training in canon and civil law. At Montpellier a celebrated medical school in existence by 1137, rapidly eclipsed its Italian counterpart at Salerno, arguably the oldest of all European universities although not recognised as such by any public authority until 1234. All these southern European and French universities were of great social and cultural significance in spreading the ideal of the cosmopolitan and professional scholar: Thomas Aquinas himself studied at Naples University for a period before his move to Paris in 1245. But their preoccupation with legal and practical studies and the influence exerted upon them by lay sovereigns, municipal authorities and the students themselves tended to inhibit them from the free pursuit of speculative and theological enquiry. Bologna itself had no regular theological faculty until 1353.

It was therefore at Paris and Oxford that the thirteenth century saw the most determined and comprehensive attempt ever made to apply the disciplines of an academic university training to the abstract issues of philosophy and theology. In these two centres the complete ascendancy of theology, now best defined as the philosophical interpretation of theological texts, would have been inconceivable in the pre-university age. As several contemporaries noted and lamented, the traditional seven liberal arts were seriously neglected and the university arts course was directed towards an intensive study of logic and the dialectic, *grammatica speculativa*, at the expense of rhetoric and grammar. This process reached its most extreme point at Paris where, for instance, mathematics never seems to have emerged as an existing academic subject—thus enabling Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln (1195–1253) and his Franciscan disciples to make Oxford the most important home of scientific enquiry.

Despite the obvious disadvantages of increasing inflexibility and the use of a highly technical jargon, the assets of the new professionalism and restriction to sharply defined theological and philosophical problems rapidly made themselves apparent. Perhaps most students suffered rather than profited from a sophisticated university syllabus by which a master's degree in theology depended upon fourteen years of severely technical training in the intricacies of the theological argument. But a handful of extremely talented thinkers, among whom Alexander of Hales (died 1245), Bonaventure (1221-1274), Albert the Great (c. 1200–1280) and Thomas Aquinas (1226–1274) are the most famous, were able to exploit their extraordinary academic expertise for the widest possible purpose—the production of the *summa*, a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the full range of human knowledge and experience. Their ideal has survived into the twentieth century and finds literary expression in the work of Marcel Proust and James Joyce, both readers and admirers of Aquinas; but never has it seemed more capable of achievement than in the middle years of the thirteenth century.

The age of synthesis

Like most universities at most times, those of thirteenth-century Europe owed their greatest achievements to the tension set up between the self-enclosed corporate community and the more radical influences of contemporary society and culture. The great scholastics of Paris and Oxford depended for lasting influence on factors quite other than their connection with the university world, its agreed syllabuses and conventional teaching methods.

In the first place, the great majority of the productive thinkers of the thirteenth century were friars: Hales and his pupil Bonaventure belonged to the Franciscan Order, while Albert and Aquinas were Dominicans. Membership of a mendicant order provided such men with a sense of purpose and cohesion which the confused tangle of university affairs alone would have made impossible. Dominican and Franciscan scholars, previously educated within their Orders' own schools and hence permitted to proceed directly to the study of theology on arrival at a university, possessed an organisation and *esprit de corps* which made them the acknowledged leaders of speculative thought in both Paris and Oxford.

At the same time, the rivalry between the two orders and, more significantly still, the jealousy displayed towards them by the secular masters, tended to polarise intellectual activity within fairly well-defined and self-generating schools. Despite continuous antagonism and occasional violent quarrels —which reached their climax in the expulsion of the Dominicans from the University of Paris in 1253–1254—the tension between secular clerk and friar provoked a series of fruitful creative crises among those involved in the struggle.

More directly influential was the intoxicating effect on Paris and Oxford scholars of the works of Aristotle, by any standards the greatest single determinant on the patterns of their thought. Many translations from Aristotle had reached the West, usually from Arabic sources, as early as the middle of the twelfth century. But it was only after the formal establishment of the new universities that revised Latin translations directly from the Greek fully revealed the implications and basic premises of Aristotle's own thought. For the first time medieval philosophers were presented with a detailed,

comprehensive and apparently self-sufficient analysis of a universe in which the Christian God played no part. The dangers of indiscriminate Aristotelianism were rapidly appreciated: as early as the twelve-twenties Pope Gregory IX warned the University of Paris against the use of Aristotle's texts until they had been 'examined and purified'. In one sense perhaps the greatest achievement of the thirteenth-century scholastics was their limitation and restriction of the potentially explosive effects of Aristotle's pagan philosophy—the protection of God in the next world and the ecclesiastical hierarchy in this from the disruptive influences of the *Ethics, Physics, Metaphysics* and *Politics*.

To the great Aristotelian challenge of the age (all the greater because by contrast so little of Plato was either read or understood) three responses were possible. The first was that of the so-called 'Latin Averroists', whose acceptance of Aristotle's philosophical tenets wherever they might lead, broke the link between reason and faith and led directly towards heresy and their outright condemnation and suppression in the last quarter of the century. The second and, generally speaking, most speedy response was essentially conservative: it might prove possible to counter Aristotle's influence in the interests of traditional 'Augustinianism' by denying the validity of his metaphysical assumptions and emphasising the supremacy of providential revelation over the human 'active intellect'. Such an approach was explored by both Franciscan and Dominican scholars until the twelve-sixties and reached perhaps its most convincing expression in Bonaventure's theory of divine illumination: 'God, although the principal agent in the action of any creature, yet gives it an active faculty, by which it may carry out its own action.'

The most famous and eventually most influential of all attempts to grapple with the Aristotelian legacy, however, was that of Aquinas and his associates. The latter decided not only, like Bonaventure, to annex, but positively to incorporate Aristotle's teachings (including his metaphysics) within the Christian world-view. It has been alleged, and never denied, that no-one before or since has ever mastered Aristotle's thought more thoroughly than Aquinas; by common assent the latter's 'Great Synthesis', originally planned by his master, Albert the Great, is the most elaborate and ambitious intellectual structure of the middle ages and perhaps of all time. Before his death at the age of forty-eight in 1274, Aquinas had written an extraordinary number of separate but interlocking works, whose implications, sometimes conservative and sometimes very much the reverse, are impossible to summarise in brief. Even the author's own synthesis and introduction to his entire corpus, the *Summa Theologiae*, was started in 1266 but never completed.

For modern philosophers Aristotle's astonishing readiness to take sensible reality as the starting point of all philosophical enquiry ('Nothing exists in the intellect unless first in the senses') has led to his enduring relevance. But for medieval thinkers, despite grave doubts both before and after his death, Aquinas immediately became the central and inescapable figure simply because his speculations marked the climax of the continuous desire to press reason into the service of faith. Opinion is still inevitably divided as to how far Aquinas achieved a successful reconciliation of such contrasting views as those between the divine and natural law, the Christian God and the 'prime mover', faith and reason themselves. It seems indisputable that Aquinas's own intentions were conservative in every sphere: like his predecessors, he was very concious of his membership of Christendom's clerical élite and never faltered in his exaltation of the Eucharist and the status of the priesthood. Equally clearly, and by a strange paradox, the conception of Aquinas was never in its own period, given the benefit of a genuinely fair trial and investigation. Aquinas's contemporaries lacked Aquinas's own intellectual nerve: within three years of his death, many of the more Aristotelian elements in his thought were officially condemned by the Bishop of Paris. The reaction to Thomism, the attempt to separate those matters subject to reason from those subject to faith, was under way before Thomism itself was properly understood.

Far left: By a strange irony late twelfth-century Avignon had been a centre of the Albigensian heresy; and it was for this reason that its original defences had been dismantled by Louis VIII of France in 1226. *As the residence of the Avignon popes between* 1309 *and* 1377 *it was extensively rebuilt and enlarged. The papal palace itself was decorated by the most famous—but usually anonymous—painters of the age. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.) Left: John Hus was a famous preacher whose appointment in* 1402 *as incumbent of the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague, established a few years earlier for the preaching of sermons in Czech, marked a turning point in the history of Bohemian heresy. The spoken sermon was apparently the single most important medium for the transmission of radical opinion in the fourteenth century.*

Rationalism and the natural sciences

It has been said that fourteenth-century thinkers were obsessed with the limits rather than the scope of reason. Certainly they had few other characteristics in common. It is accordingly not surprising that the work of men like Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Thomas Bradwardine, Marsiglio of Padua and Bartolus of Sassoferrato was based on different premises and came to even more different conclusions. What is startling by comparison with the thirteenth century, is the failure of the universities to attempt a serious reconciliation of the many discordant voices. Within the framework of the traditional debating topics like the apostolic poverty of Christ and the nature of divine grace, serious contradictions were stated and then, more seriously, left unresolved.

The history of thought like that of art is prone to move in cycles; and it was probably inevitable that a long period of uncoordinated criticism should follow the coherent theories on philosophy. In particular, the most powerful techniques of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries became the most serious liabilities of the later middle ages. The systematisation of logic and dialectic as the fundamental weapon of intellectual enquiry finally led to a serious chasm between life and thought. The ascendancy of theology, which had once liberated, now inhibited detached philosophical enquiry. Fourteenth-century intellectuals speak to the modern world more forcefully and cogently than those of any other medieval period; but they were the last representatives of a gradually dying common purpose.

By common agreement the three greatest figures in the history of the critical reaction against Thomist (Thomas Aquinas) philosophy and the authoritarian claims of the Church were Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and Marsiglio of Padua. Of these Duns Scotus was certainly the most complex and probably the most profound thinker. Before his death at the age of forty in Cologne (1308) the 'subtle doctor' had prepared the way for a widespread retreat from the intellectual positions of the thirteenth century. Indeed his works, and particularly the two *Commentaries on the Sentences*, take the form of an attempt to grapple with the conclusions of Aquinas in the light of their partial condemnation by the Bishop of Paris, Etienne Templier, in 1277. Like Aquinas, Duns Scotus drew heavily on Aristotle, but in his case for the paradoxical purpose of liberating Christian theology from the stranglehold of pagan philosophy. Duns replaced the Thomist emphasis on knowledge and reason by stressing the primacy of God's love and will. If God only does as He wills it followed that no human attempt to explain divine action can ever be successful; for by its very nature God's Will is beyond the grasp of a purely rational enquiry. On the other hand, Duns believed that human reason and divine revelation still complemented each other and that there was no contradiction between the two.

It was William of Ockham (c. 1300–1349) who took the vital step of denying that there was any inherent connection between faith and reason at all, thus dealing the deathblow to the central assumption upon which the great intellectual structures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been built. Ockham's basic premise was the sovereignty of the individual thing or being; this alone was real, this alone could be known. It therefore followed—by the principles of Ockham's razor—that the introduction of abstract terms or concepts would destroy clarity of perception and comprehension. 'Beings shall not be multiplied without necessity (*entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem*).' If intuition rather than abstraction was the means of acquiring knowledge, the road to complete intellectual agnosticism was open. As God himself can never be known intuitively, his existence can presumably never be proved. Such a belief directly rejected the validity of supernatural speculation as practised by Aquinas and even Duns Scotus and had immediately destructive effects on the political theory of the age as well. The papacy's claim to a distinctive knowledge of God's purposes could not be defended in a world where there could never be any certainty as to His actions.

Ockham's hostile and personally stormy relationship with the fourteenth-century papacy was shared by his contemporary, Marsiglio of Padua (c. 1275–1342). Accepting the basic premise that the nature of God's intervention on earth had to be taken on faith and could never be explained by reason, Marsiglio went on to consider how 'peace and tranquillity' could best be attained in this world. In his *Defensor Pacis*, completed in 1324, Marsiglio subordinated the Church to a state whose authority was derived from the sovereign people. The papacy enjoyed no inherent jurisdiction either in the temporal or the spiritual fields; for in the latter too the principal authority should be a general council representing the views of all members of the Church, laymen as well as priests. Such views, associated with Ockham's philosophical scepticism, achieved a short-term theoretical success during the conciliar movement. Their long-term effect was even more revolutionary; for they attacked the central medieval thesis of an authoritarian clerical order with an undisputed right to guide the fortunes of the laity.

Ockham's theory of knowledge had equally revolutionary effects in the field of scientific enquiry. The thirteenth century had seen important developments, especially at Oxford, within the study of mathematics, optics and astronomy; but poor communications restricted knowledge of the new discoveries to a small circle of university scholars, often uninterested in the practical application of their theories.

The work of Roger Bacon (c. 1214–1292) at Paris and Oxford is the most famous example; it was characteristic that he should advocate experiment as a method of rational investigation without—as far as is known—engaging in much experimental work on his own account. More significantly, Bacon subordinated his scientific interests to the familiar transcendental outlook of the thirteenth century: 'One science, that of theology, is the mistress of all others.' Ockham's sacrifice of abstract concepts for physical reality led to the eventual abandonment of this view.

The dawning realisation—at first very tentative—that a gulf had opened between the principles behind natural and supernatural knowledge lies at the basis of the scientific renaissance at the University of Paris in the late fourteenth century. Jean Buridan (c. 1300–1358) and Nicholas Oresme (c. 1320–1382) shared Ockham's own preoccupation with dynamics—a topic which raised in a practical form the problems of physical reality and causation.

But despite recent claims to the contrary, the academic study of science in the medieval university was trapped within an intellectual blind alley. The ability of the French scholars in question is undoubted; but it could hardly prevail against the technological limitations of their period and the disruption of the University of Paris which accompanied the renewed outbreak of the Hundred Years' War in the decades after 1400.

The collapse of universalism

Although the intellectual synthesis of the age of Aquinas was destroyed by self-inflicted wounds, it could in any case never have survived the political, social, and economic changes of the fourteenth century. The decline of the papacy's ecumenical authority, the failure of the international crusading ideal, the outbreak of sustained and disruptive warfare in northern Europe, and the economic crisis which preceded and followed the incidence of widespread bubonic plague—all themes discussed elsewhere in this book—were symptoms of the general disintegration of a previous world order. Throughout western Europe this disintegration can be observed in a concrete geographical form: provincial tendencies triumphed at the expense of central authority and claims to universal dominion. The political history of Germany after the period of 1257–1275 when the country had no effective ruler, is the classic example of the success of these separatist forces at the expense of imperial power; but developments there can be paralleled in Italy, France and Scotland.

It must be emphasised that the charac-

teristic political unit in the age of Petrarch and Chaucer was usually the dynastic, sometimes the city, but never the 'nation' state. Nevertheless the new or newly articulate political localism of the period helped to promote the rapid acceleration of cultural and intellectual differentiation within Europe. In this sphere, a decisive role was often played by the prince's 'court', a social milieu which acted as a magnetic force on artists and writers to an extent that would have been unthinkable in the period of Abelard or even Aquinas.

It would be misleading to draw too sharp a line between the world of court and university. One of the major social functions of the latter was to prepare intelligent clerks and sometimes laymen for the service of their prince. The talented group of writers who clustered around the entourage of Charles V of France and his sons at the end of the century, men like Nicholas Oresme and Pierre D'Ailly (1350–1420), always preserved close links with the University of Paris from which they had received their training. On the other hand, and by its very nature, the prince's court encouraged both its clerical and lay members to adopt a more secular approach to life and learning than was possible or desirable in a medieval university. It is a suitable and symbolic commentary on the new situation that Boccaccio (1313–1375) attempted but quickly abandoned the study of canon law, while Geoffrey Chaucer (1345–1400) probably never experienced the dubious benefits of a university education at all.

Boccaccio and Chaucer are of course most renowned for their central role in the literary development of their respective languages. Without question the fourteenth was the decisive century for the emergence or revival of the spoken literatures of western Europe. Here too was another threat, at first indirect, to the primacy of the medieval university. The persistence of the belief that the universal language of Latin was the most suitable vehicle for the communication of serious intellectual enquiry must not be underestimated: it was to encourage fifteenth-century Italian humanists in their ambitious but fundamentally misguided attempt to

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries universities arose as a result of growing demands of theology, law and medicine, as well as increasing knowledge which followed the rediscovery of the works of Aristotle. Many, such as Cambridge, were founded by students migrating from other universities. Others were established by royalty and the Church. As the map shows there was a dramatic expansion in the number of universities during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

revive Ciceronian Latin as an all-sufficient language. But by 1400 many writers were already and often painfully aware of the challenge to medieval Latin. Of the three major works of the English poet John Gower (c. 1330–1408), the *Miroir de l'omme* was written in French, the *Vox Clamantis* in Latin, and the *Confessio Amantis* in English.

More significantly still, the fourteenth century revealed the advantages of the spoken word as a medium of instruction and edification within the Church itself. A large proportion of European parish priests at all times in the middle ages would have been unable to read the Latin Vulgate, let alone the writings of Aquinas or Ockham. But the effect of such developments as the inflammatory vernacular sermons of John Milic in Prague during the thirteen-sixties or the early English versions of the Bible which appeared a few years later was to make clear as never before the divorce between the language of the university lecture-room and the world of practical Christianity.

However, the rapid expansion in the number of European universities during the later middle ages reminds us that these institutions continued to fulfil an important social function, as well as testifying to the strength of national differences. In 1300 Christendom possessed twenty-three universities, all situated in Italy or the Spanish peninsula except for five in France (of which Paris alone was in the first rank), and Oxford and Cambridge in England. Two centuries later there were seventy-five universities, including three in the remote kingdom of Scotland as well as no less than sixteen in areas east of the Rhine. The results of this remarkable development are difficult to assess, partly because the full history of the late medieval university is still unwritten.

It is clear that the foundation of universities like Prague (1348), Vienna (1365) and St Andrews (1411) represented a reaction against the previous ascendancy of Paris, Oxford and Bologna, in the interests of Bohemian, Austrian and Scottish regional needs. Similarly these and other universities attracted local aristocratic interest, patronage and even participation to an extent unparalleled before 1300. The rapid growth of colleges within the *studium generale*, most dramatically seen at Oxford and Cambridge, can be readily interpreted as part of the general trend towards a view of the university as a centre of local privilege rather than international learning. On the other hand it might be argued that the multiplication of European universities, nearly all deriving both their institutional and educational patterns from the Parisian and Bolognese archetypes, delayed for a while the complete collapse of an international intelligentsia.

The career of Nicolas Copernicus (1473–1543), who studied at the Universities of Cracow, Bologna, Padua, and Ferrara, and who lectured in mathematics at Rome itself (before settling at Frauenburg on the Baltic), illustrates the survival of the ideal of the cosmopolitan scholar. Copernicus was reading a text of Thomas Aquinas in the week before he died.

Late medieval heresy

The heresies associated with the English John Wycliffe (c. 1329–1384) and the Czech John Hus (c. 1369–1415) brought the disruptive forces within fourteenth-century thought and society to an extreme but not illogical conclusion. Both movements eventually took the form of a localised protest against the powerful position of the papacy as the spiritual and doctrinal ruler of Christendom. Lollards and Hussites exploited not only the prevailing anticlericalism of their age but also the spoken or written word as an essential instrument of propaganda. Wycliffe and Hus represented

the more detached critical spirit of fourteenth-century thought; at the same time they revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of its universities. Academic unorthodox opinion might develop, given the appropriate social conditions, into popular heresy; but academic influence on the world outside the university walls was too insecure and slight to control or guide that heresy's future.

John Wycliffe, more or less permanently resident at Oxford as a university teacher, administrator and writer during the thirteen-sixties and seventies, was, is and will always remain a controversial figure. He can only be understood, if at all, within the context of the Oxford schools. Attempts to explain his career in terms of a series of personal outbursts of moral indignation at the corruption of the contemporary Church, or alternatively as the result of bitterness at his lack of ecclesiastical promotion, make him a less rather than a more intelligible figure. Wycliffe's intellectual force had intellectual roots. His audacious attacks on traditional doctrines of the Church were grounded in his detailed knowledge of the works of his immediate predecessors.

Wycliffe first acquired a reputation through his vigorous attack on the conclusions of Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. At the same time the nominalists' denial of the value of human reason for the interpretation of divine truth and their consequent emphasis upon God's *potentia absoluta* opened the way to Wycliffe's own eventual belief that revealed doctrine could be derived from the Bible alone. More precisely still, it was Wycliffe's own participation in one of the continuing debating issues of the fourteenth-century university that led to his central conclusion that lordship depended on God's grace alone—with its result that everyone in a state of grace has true lordship. More influential and corrosive because more intelligible was Wycliffe's attack on the doctrine of transubstantiation; but here too the heretical leader's attitude to the Eucharist betrays—despite some opinions to the contrary—the ambiguous and academic approach of an ingenious and logic-chopping schoolman.

Perhaps the greatest paradox of Wycliffe's career is that this notorious university scholar founded a popular heresy but not an intellectual school. Sympathy for Wycliffe's ideas in Oxford itself was never very enthusiastic, and crumbled away completely under relatively slight pressure from the English ecclesiastical hierarchy. The complete collapse of university support condemned Lollardry to a sterile future.

Significantly, it was the critical rather than positive elements within Wycliffe's teachings which gave his 'poor priests' a transitory period of missionary success. The disendowment of the English Church was a programme attractive to many who had little sympathy with Wycliffe's doctrinal heresies. But with one or two exceptions, notably the Herefordshire knight Sir John Oldcastle, who led an ill-organised and abortive rising in early 1414, Lollardry failed to win gentry support. The history of fifteenth-century Lollard survival makes pathetic reading, and the view that it had little direct influence on the English Reformation is undoubtedly the correct one. The later Lollards' hostility towards the veneration of images and rejection of transubstantiation owed less to Wycliffe's ideas than to the ever-present crude materialism of the uneducated.

The history of the Hussite movement in Bohemia was very different and much more complex. Like Wycliffe, Hus was a university-trained theologian who eventually came to deny papal supremacy. But his general attitude towards the Church and the priesthood was essentially orthodox: in particular he was intent on exalting rather than disparaging the sacrament of the Eucharist. The most radical feature of English heresy had been Wycliffe's own ideas: there was no parallel for the dramatic political, social and religious consequences which followed the burning of Hus at Constance on 6 July 1415. The religious programme of the Utraquists, who adhered to the principle of communion in both kinds by the laity, appealed to the provincial sentiments and economic self-interest of the Bohemian and Moravian nobility.

In the confusion that followed the collapse of central government in Bohemia, the social extremism of the lower orders in Prague and various Czech villages exploded into a form of wild religious radicalism. The long series of military invasions by imperial expeditions intent on crushing Bohemian resistance positively postponed the restoration of social and religious order. The talented leadership of the Czech knight John Zizka and (after his death in 1424) his successor, the priest Prokop the Shaven, held the anti-Hussite crusades at bay. Only in the fourteen-thirties was a compromise settlement arranged. By the 'Compacts' of Prague in 1433 the laity of Bohemia were conceded the right to communion in both kinds; but the papacy recovered its formal control over organised religion in central Europe.

It is dangerously easy to overestimate the significance of the Wycliffite and Hussite movements. Although neither heresy was absolutely annihilated, both were ultimately absorbed within the framework of the medieval Church. Despite the attempt of Prokop's 'warriors of God' to carry their

Of the two great heresiarchs of the later middle ages, John Wycliffe was at once more radical and less successful than Hus in communicating his ideas to a popular audience.
Left: a bishop preaching. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

radical creed to Silesia, Saxony, Bavaria and even (in 1433) to Poland, these principalities remained orthodox. Heresy at the subterranean level was regularly found in later medieval Europe, but there is little evidence that it spread significantly in the years immediately after 1400. Events in both England and Bohemia proved that the Church could still contain a direct heterodox attack on its doctrines and authority—not least because such an attack aroused the conservative instincts of the socially dominant nobility and urban patriciates. More dangerous and subtle were the long-term consequences of a personal and less public withdrawal from the claims of papal and Church authority.

The withdrawal from authority

The cultural and intellectual life of fifteenth-century Europe has recently been described as one of 'a strange standstill between seed-time and harvest'. Such a standstill is of course largely illusory; but the remark makes a valid comment upon an age whose religious currents and mental tensions are difficult to define and grasp. A central characteristic of the period was the cultivation of a deliberately individual, informal and unorganised attitude to the problems posed by the existence of this world and the next. It is no coincidence that the most influential book of the period was *The Imitation of Christ*, a manual of personal and austere devotion traditionally assigned to Thomas A Kempis (c. 1380–1471), one of the most self-effacing of all Christian teachers. By contrast, contemporary attempts to organise thought and religious practice at a more public and international level were consistently unsuccessful.

The greatest failure was without doubt that of the Church itself. There is much truth in the view that the conciliar movement was one of the greatest lost opportunities in the history of the Christian Church. The prelates, theologians and canon lawyers assembled at the councils of Constance and Basle between 1414 and 1442 lacked neither ability nor intellectual courage: they provide an indirect tribute to the continuing strengths of a medieval university education. But like academics at most times, they were unable to convert their proposals into concrete reforms. 'Conciliarism was to remain pure theory'; and it did not take the popes long to emancipate themselves from the principle and practice of subjection to a general council.

The conciliarists suffered from the fact that national and local divergencies had already so divided Christendom that it was even more difficult to establish a unanimous council than an acceptable Pope. Accordingly their movement was less a genuine party than a collection of talented individuals like the French Jean Gerson (1363–1429) and German Dietrich of Niem (c. 1340–1418). By 1450 few conciliarists remained: they had always comprised a small minority within the Church itself and gradually drifted back—through inertia rather than conviction—to the traditional view of papal monarchy. Nothing provides more conclusive proof that the medieval clergy had lost its cohesion and ability to propound a common programme of reform—those qualities which had led to its greatest triumphs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The conciliar movement also exemplifies the second of the great weaknesses of the organised Church in the fifteenth century: the failure to take the laity into real and meaningful partnership. The exclusion of representatives of secular interests from full participation in the work of the councils contradicted not only the logic of conciliarist theory but the political realities of a situation in which the will of the lay prince was always the decisive factor.

More serious still was the Church's failure at the local level to provide satisfactory outlets for the religious aspirations of the increasingly literate and self-confident gentleman and urban parishioner. Neither the religious orthodoxy nor the pious generosity of the great mass of fifteenth-century laymen is seriously in doubt. Their patronage of such institutions as the academic college and, above all, the chantry within an existing parish church, showed few signs of slackening during the course of the fifteenth century. The chantry indeed might be interpreted as the late medieval Church's grudging and inadequate concession to the religious enthusiasms and needs of its secular flock. For the layman the chantry priest, rather than the monk, friar or dignitary of a large collegiate church, was the most significant figure in organised religion; for the ecclesiastical hierarchy he was a poor and insignificant member of the clergy, never fully integrated into the life of the Church.

But the popularity of the chantry foundation was only one of the many symptoms of the growth of a more popular and devotional religion in the later middle ages. Mysticism, the quest for direct personal experience of God, was of course a traditional medieval and indeed Christian ideal; but in the fifteenth century it became increasingly the concern of the laity and poor priests rather than the clerical élite.

Margery Kemp, an illiterate and truculent Norfolk woman who died about 1440, had no more confidence in the validity of her own visions of the divine than in the words of the Church's own preselected contemplatives, the English monks and friars. The corporate mysticism of the Rhineland and Low Countries owed its success to the pious aspirations of the urban laity rather than the direction of the official Church. Under the initial inspiration of Ruysbroeck (1293–1381) and his disciple Gerard Groote (1340–1384), the Brethren of the Common Life continued to embody the *nova devotio*, the ideal of a devout lay community, until the Reformation.

Such developments represented not only a withdrawal from the traditional institutions of the Church but an indirect reaction against the role of reason in the religious life. This is not to deny that the religious movements of the period often owed their origins to the works of scholars and universities; orthodox mysticism owed much to Dominican theologians of the thirteenth century, while the survival of Averroism perpetuated an academic heresy in popular form. But it is hard to resist the conclusion that the most vigorous forms of religious life and worship in the fifteenth century were explicitly or implicitly anti-intellectual. At the worst, irrational emotionalism or, at the best, rational common sense of the type displayed by Thomas A Kempis replaced the complicated intellectual conceptions of the earlier age. Like the other institutions of the Church, the medieval university now suffered a fate worse than violent criticism or attack: as a source of information on the higher truths of Christianity it was quietly ignored. Perhaps it was possible after all, to 'do good without knowledge'. Or perhaps what was needed, as both Erasmus and the Quattrocento Italian humanists believed, was a new definition of learning to replace an outworn ideal.

Right: scene in a castle.
Below: a bishop being reproached by a layman for some negligence or act of corruption. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

This map shows France at the time of the Treaty of Brétigny—Calais (1360) which ended the first major phase of the Hundred Years' War. It brought about the humiliation of France when Edward III became supreme lord of Aquitaine, Ponthieu, Calais and the County of Guines. The French also had to pay a huge ransom for their King John II, who had been captured by the English.

England and France at peace and war

English kings claim French land; the Plantagenets battle for authority; clashes with the Scots; French kings struggle for economic survival; brutality with a veneer of chivalry—the Hundred Years' War; English wool brings prosperity; Charles V burdens the French with taxes.

On 6 March 1204 the troops of King Philip Augustus of France (1180–1223) captured the formidable fortress of Château-Gaillard, recently built by Richard I of England to defend his duchy of Normandy against Capetian attack. There are few more significant dates in the history of either France or England. Within a few months Richard's younger brother, King John (1199–1216), had lost Normandy for ever; for the first time since a duke of Normandy had seized King Harold's crown in 1066, the rulers of England were effectively debarred from playing a decisive military role in northern France.

Throughout the rest of the thirteenth century the two kingdoms experienced very different types of political evolution; but their divorce was never final. Similarities between the French and English political, social and cultural traditions remained more striking than their divergencies from a common pattern. By a strange irony it was these similarities, and more precisely the persistence of the belief that both kingdoms formed one coherent and viable political unity, which led—four generations after John's loss of Normandy—to the longest Anglo-French war in the history of western Europe.

The ascendancy of France

Throughout the middle ages the fortunes of England and France were inextricably intertwined within a network of close and binding influences. It was an alliance within which France, during the thirteenth century above all, was usually the dominant partner. In the age of St Louis and Philip the Fair,

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries witnessed a steady development rather than a revolution in the art of war. Firearms began to play a part in warfare earlier than the battle of Crécy in 1346*; but the technical limitations of the early cannon prevented them from exercising a decisive military effect until the end of the Hundred Years' War. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Late medieval siege-warfare is here illustrated from a manuscript history of the Trojan War now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. Violent assault on the walls of a well fortified city, understandably a favourite subject among chivalric chroniclers and miniaturists, was in fact relatively infrequent during the period between 1204 *and* 1380. *Manuscripts. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

northern France rather than Rome or Germany was the heartland of the characteristic values of medieval Christendom. Nowhere was French influence more pervasive than across the English Channel.

The ruling English dynasty of the Plantagenets was itself French in origin and continued to be French in outlook and attitude. Every king of England between 1199 and 1461 married a French princess or heiress. The English aristocracy, like the English court, not only spoke French but its ranks were continually filled by recruits from the French mainland. Simon de Montfort, now remembered as the leader of a native English opposition to the crown, was himself a first-generation immigrant from the kingdom of France. Edward I, conventionally known as 'the founder of the English nation', chose as his personal friends favourites who—like his military captain, Otto de Grandison—were French by birth.

In the artistic and intellectual fields, French primacy and influence were equally obvious. Although several areas gradually evolved their own distinctive styles of Gothic architecture, thirteenth-century English masons all worked within the general framework of the technical discoveries and aesthetic assumptions pioneered in the north of France during the late twelfth century. The rebuilding of Westminster Abbey in the years after 1245 marked a deliberate and successful attempt by an English king, Henry III, to build a great church in the contemporary French style. Similarly the reconstruction of St Stephen's Chapel in Westminster Palace after 1292 was the result of Edward I's desire to emulate its earlier and more famous counterpart—St Louis' *Sainte Chapelle* on the Ile de la Cité in Paris. In a very different sphere, the intellectual life of the new English universities at Oxford and Cambridge tended to revolve around the great debating issues already raised at Paris.

As both the Capetain and the Plantagenet kingdoms were mercifully free from any strong sense of national identity, the extent of French cultural influence provoked little opposition or resentment within England. No one in the thirteenth century, for example, seriously championed the cause of English, a language almost completely ignored by writers with any interest in literary style or the abstract discussion of ideas. The rapidly evolving political ascendancy of the Capetian kings was another matter; and here the characteristic attitude of the English kings to their French counterparts was one of grudging admiration interspersed with periods of jealous resentment.

The Plantagenet monarchs could never afford to be indifferent to the extraordinary success with which the thirteenth-century Capetians extended their authority over a kingdom three times as large as that of England. Successive English kings, notably John in 1214, Henry III in 1230 and 1242–1243 and Edward I in 1294–1297, unsuccessfully attempted to reverse the humiliation of the loss of Normandy by means of armed attacks on the French kingdom. Admittedly these three kings did preserve their control over a much reduced duchy of Gascony, an area of south-western France rarely of urgent concern to a Capetian dynasty which preferred to centre its activities and feed its territorial appetites north rather than south of the Loire. The complexities of a situation by which the King of England (after the treaty of Paris in 1259) was obliged to render personal homage to the King of France for his continental possessions are often said to have lain at the root of the Hundred Years' War.

Certainly the legal confusion which characterised English lordship in Gascony, a province notorious for its turbulent nobility, was always capable of offering a suitable excuse to any French or English monarch who positively wished to make war upon his neighbour. But it was probably more important that the Plantagenets' feudal subservience, as Dukes of Gascony or Guienne, to the Capetian king, made explicit the moral ascendancy of the latter. It was a relationship with which no English sovereign could be expected to remain content; and only the weaknesses of the Plantagenets within their own kingdom deferred a sustained trial of strength until the fourteenth century.

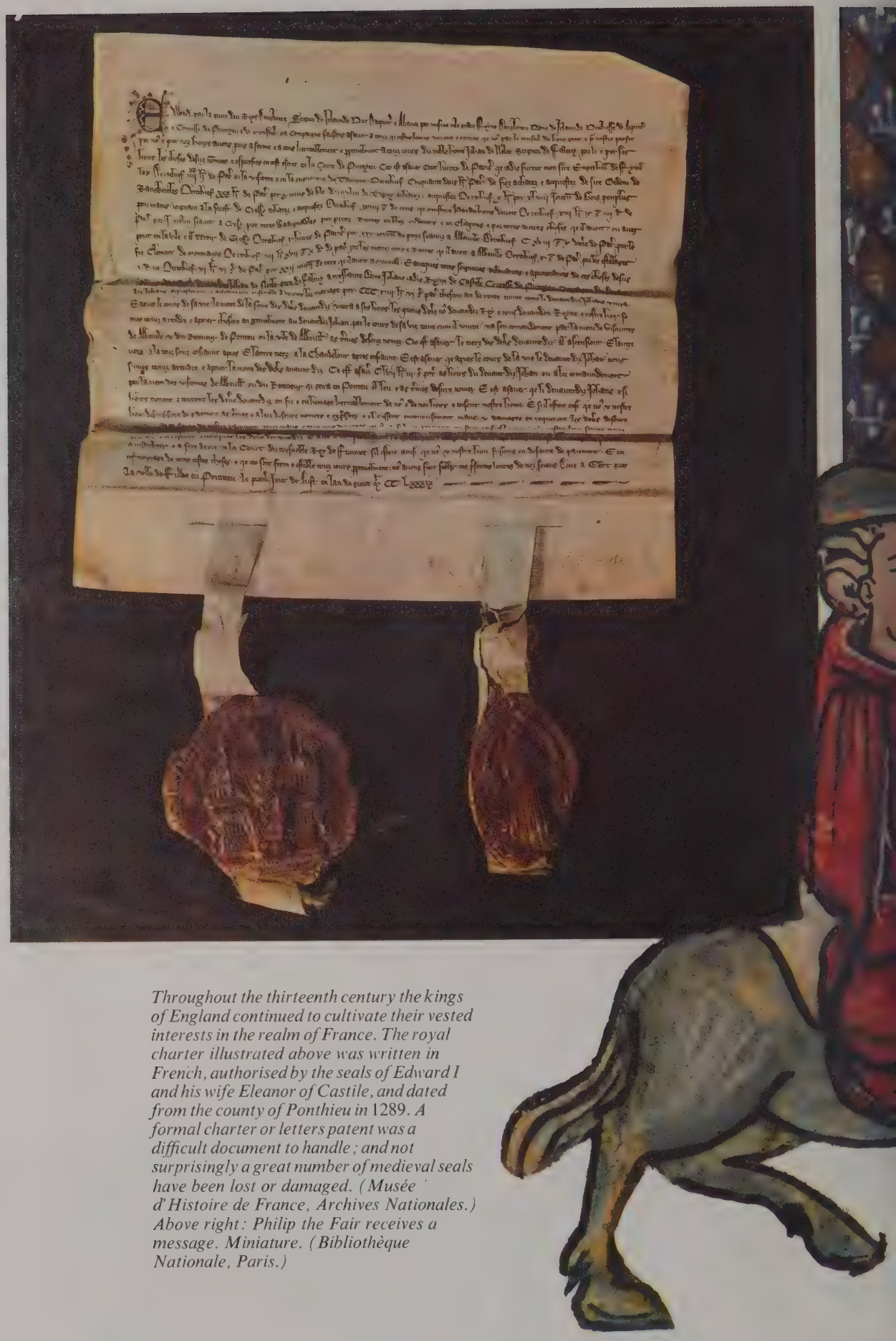
English kingship under attack: John and Henry III

Nothing is more remarkable in the whole of English history than the early date—unparalleled in Europe north of the Alps—at which a relatively remote kingdom had been subjected to the will of a central lord. Thanks to the precocious achievements of William the Conqueror, his successors, Henry I (1100–1135) and Henry II (1154–1189), stand out as the most forceful—as opposed to the most pretentious—rulers of their age. King John's inability to prevent Normandy from falling into the hands of Philip Augustus in 1204 was both a symptom and a cause of the decline of royal authority within England. Already by the end of the twelfth century there were signs that the exceptional power of the Anglo-Norman and Angevin monarchy was beginning to provoke its own counterpoise and antithesis: a series of opposition movements to the crown.

It was of course inevitable that this opposition should be conducted by members of the English baronage, sometimes in association with groups of knights as well as reforming churchmen like Archbishop Stephen Langton of Canterbury (1207–1228) and Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln (1235–1253). Although the twelfth and thirteenth-century ruler owed much of his strength to his position as feudal King, he was inevitably vulnerable to attack by lords who renounced their fealty to him on the grounds that he had broken the principles of the feudal 'contract'. In themselves, isolated aristocratic protests against the misrule of an oppressive or negligent king were the most characteristic form of political struggle in medieval Europe. But baronial opposition in thirteenth-century England presented its kings with a more permanent challenge: it was often sustained over periods of many years, it was sometimes successful and, above all, it found expression in written programmes and legal enactments. Resistance to the king had in fact become articulate.

The events of the last two years of John's reign (1214–1216) first provided a detailed demonstration of the vulnerability of the English crown to baronial attack. John died in the middle of a savage civil war which it is unlikely he could ever have won. Even more significant than his military failure was his enforced consent to Magna Carta at Runnymede in June 1215.

The Great Charter deserves its fame. By the end of the year it had already become what it has ever since remained—a docu-



Throughout the thirteenth century the kings of England continued to cultivate their vested interests in the realm of France. The royal charter illustrated above was written in French, authorised by the seals of Edward I and his wife Eleanor of Castile, and dated from the county of Ponthieu in 1289. *A formal charter or letters patent was a difficult document to handle ; and not surprisingly a great number of medieval seals have been lost or damaged. (Musée d'Histoire de France, Archives Nationales.) Above right : Philip the Fair receives a message. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

ment less important for its contents than as an abstract and ill-defined expression of the monarch's obligation to respect the traditional rights of his more substantial subjects. Most of the Charter's detailed provisions, especially those relating to the complexities of feudal land tenure, were rapidly outdated by developments within the English social order. But for the rest of the middle ages Magna Carta was frequently reissued as a reminder that the authority of a monarch over his subjects could and might be limited.

In a more subtle way the kingship of John's long-lived son, Henry III (1216–1272), was also controlled and conditioned by the attitudes of a restless and potentially hostile baronage. The contemporary ideal of a harmonious relationship with the king cannot conceal the grave weaknesses of Henry III's position. He deservedly lost the confidence of most of the English nobles at an early stage of his reign and thenceforward his room for manoeuvre was extremely limited. In particular the tax-resistance of his baronage consistently prevented him from tapping the considerable wealth of his kingdom.

It was financial insolvency which compelled Henry to submit to the radical reform plan forced upon him by the majority of his barons in 1258. The Provisions of Oxford of that year contained detailed proposals for the replacement of traditional royal supremacy by a series of consultative, legislative and executive committees, all strongly representative of baronial interests. Not surprisingly, Henry III soon attempted to extricate himself from his oath to observe the Provisions. In the armed struggle which followed, the weaknesses within the baronial movement, never an organised party, were inevitably exposed and the *status quo* restored. But in the year before his death at the Battle of Evesham, Simon de Montfort had proved not only that an English king might be defeated and captured in battle (Lewes in May 1264) but that England might be governed without a king.

English monarchy vindicated: Edward I (1272–1307)

'By God's blood I will not be silent but will defend my rights with all my strength!' Edward I's angry outburst against Archbishop Winchelsea of Canterbury in 1300 reflects the characteristic theme and tone of his attitude to kingship. According to his most sympathetic historian, Edward I was 'a conventional man in a changing age'. A conservative by temperament and inclination, he nevertheless presided over a revolution in the principles and practice of government. No ruler between William the Conqueror and Henry VIII made a more lasting contribution to the cause of English monarchy.

The essential condition for Edward's success was his ability as a war-leader. His personal participation in a crusade to the Holy Land (1270–1274), the well-planned campaigns of 1277–1294 which deprived Wales of its political independence, and his prominent role as a European statesman all established Edward's prestige within his own country. As a result a remarkably able group of royal servants, most notably Robert Burnell, Chancellor of England from 1274 to 1292, were able to carry through a vast programme of complicated reforms in the spheres of governmental administration and the land law.

Of all the achievements of the reign, however, none was more valuable than Edward's success in solving the financial problems which had consistently defeated the efforts of his father and grandfather. In 1275, the year after his return from Syria and Italy, Edward persuaded his first parliament to accept the tax of a national duty of half a mark (6s. 8d.) on a sack of wool or 300 wool fells and a mark on a last of hides. This 'Great and Ancient Custom', to use its later title, paved the way for a massive exploitation of taxes on and in wool by later medieval English governments, a lucrative source of revenue never available to their Capetian and Valois rivals.

Of greater constitutional significance was Edward's success in imposing regular direct taxation in the form of subsidies on movable

property, upon both laity and clergy. Against bitter opposition from the reluctant taxpayer and the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Edward was the first English monarch to familiarise his subjects with the doctrine that the king could not 'live of his own' but had a right, however ill-defined, to frequent levies of extraordinary taxation.

The need to secure representative assent to royal taxation lies at the very heart of the early history of the English parliament. Much ink has been expended, often fruitlessly, on the quest for the origins of this famous institution. At once a supreme law-court, an enlarged royal council and a general deliberative assembly, the early English parliament was first and foremost an instrument of royal power and not of opposition to the crown. It owed its most distinctive feature, the regular attendance of burgesses and knights of the shire as representatives of the English commons, to the king's desire to extract taxation from his subjects as frequently and painlessly as possible. Within a generation of Edward I's death the commons were to become an indispensable component of every English parliament. The county gentleman and burgess were accorded an important role in a frequently summoned if short-lived assembly; an arena within which, very hesitantly and many years later, they learnt to express their own political grievances and aspirations.

But to the many valuable legacies of his reign, Edward I added a conflict which for the next generation threatened to prejudice the rest of his achievements. Tempted by the accidental death in 1286 of the Scottish king, Alexander III, and the resulting succession dispute, Edward attempted to force the northern kingdom into political subjection to himself. The outbreak of Anglo-Scottish hostilities in 1296–1297 marked a genuine watershed in the history of the two kingdoms. An able and ruthless monarch had overreached himself by overestimating his own resources and underestimating the Scot's capacity for resistance.

Edward I died at Burgh-on-Sands in July 1307 during a last great campaign designed to achieve total victory over Robert Bruce, by then the recently crowned king of Scotland. The new English king, Edward II (1307–1327), lacked the personal force to prove a successful ruler; but it was his complete inability to withstand the aggressive activity of Robert Bruce, particularly during the disastrous years which followed the battle of Bannockburn in 1314, that led to the complete collapse of his authority and eventual deposition and murder. Only when the English kings learnt to appreciate that the Scottish problem could never be solved, but might be contained or ignored, were they able to resume their traditional preoccupation with their role in France.

Capetian kingship

By comparison with the vicissitudes of royal authority in thirteenth-century England, the fortunes of the late Capetian kings presented to contemporary observers a spectacular example of growing power and prestige. In the age of Henry III and St Louis the historical tables seemed to have been neatly turned: the traditional supremacy of English kingship had proved illusory, while in France strength had grown out of weakness. After 1204 the Capetian dynasty, finally liberated from what Marc Bloch called its long period of 'vegetation', was at last able to build its own success story upon the strong foundations of the kingdom's prosperity. St Louis and his grandson, Philip the Fair, enjoyed an ascendancy in Europe unrivalled even by their famous successor Louis XIV four centuries later.

The most obvious asset of the late Capetians was the personalities of the kings themselves. Not one of the last eight Capetian monarchs was a genuinely incompetent ruler, itself an impressive achievement in view of the length of the period (1180–1328) and the inherent weaknesses of any governmental system based on hereditary descent. All took themselves and their kingly office extremely seriously, all were at

The prosperity of thirteenth-century France rested on a basis of sustained and arduous agricultural labour. The primitive and often wretched conditions of village life are rarely reflected in the numerous contemporary illustrations of this theme. The latter almost always idealise the peasants' lot by emphasising the joys of harvest and (right) *music-making in the fields. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

least partially literate, and all were physically impressive men. A strong sense of family pride and the absence of any succession crises or minorities (with the single exception of the regency of Queen Blanche of Castile between 1226 and 1234) enabled the dynasty to pursue a coherent and consistent policy in a way quite exceptional in the middle ages. Equally unusual was the Capetians' readiness to apply religious principles to their public and private life. Like Queen Victoria in nineteenth-century Britain, the thirteenth-century French monarchs helped to set—as well, of course, as to reflect—the moral tone of their subjects.

The career of King Louis IX (1226–1270) and even more his posthumous reputation as St Louis is central to the French political tradition in the middle ages. The assiduously calculated cultivation of St Louis's personality after his death was not only successful in securing his canonisation in 1297, but makes it difficult to set his achievements within the context of his own lifetime. Thus what seem to us his greatest failures, the abortive Egyptian crusade of 1248–1251 and the expedition to Tunis on which he met his death in 1270, did more than anything to establish his contemporary reputation.

St Louis's kingship contains many such paradoxes: no medieval ruler was ever more successful in achieving his central objective of making a profit from the giving of justice. Other medieval monarchs shared St Louis's piety, religious zeal and magnanimity; but in addition St Louis pursued an active secular life, seen at its most characteristic when he pronounced legal judgements as God's own deputy before a large assembly of his subjects.

The transmutation of a French king into a European saint was the ultimate proof of the theory that the Capetian monarch was not as other rulers. This view had its roots in earlier Capetian history and gradually developed into the famous claim that the King of France was 'emperor in his own kingdom': earlier Philip Augustus had maintained, within the feudal context, that he could have vassals but never be one himself.

Upon this assertion of absolute feudal overlordship was grafted the more extreme principles of Christian kingship and possibly even the influences of Roman imperialism. Although he was not a priest himself, the king's office was sacramental in quality and carried in its train a complex variety of supernatural attributes and legends, ranging from the ability to cure scrofulous diseases by touch through such mysteries as the 'secret du roi' to the doctrine of the blood royal. Thanks to the miraculous oil with which he was anointed at his coronation in Reims cathedral, that most politically powerful of all French public rituals, the king was 'le roi très chrétien', the truly Christian king, as well as 'the eldest of the race of Charlemagne'.

The success with which the Capetian monarchs persuaded their own subjects of their semi-divine status has never been satisfactorily explained. Even Matthew Paris, a thirteenth-century St Albans chronicler with no reason to admire the kings of France, quoted with approval the reply of St Louis's brother, Robert of Artois, when he was offered the imperial crown. He refused 'because we believe that the noble kingship of France with its line of royal blood going back to the sceptre of the Franks is much more excellent than any imperial throne, which can only be awarded by election; and the Count Robert much prefers being brother to such an illustrious king to being even Emperor'.

Perhaps the greatest victim of the growth of royal authority in thirteenth-century France and England was the papacy, whose claims to universal lordship were subjected to a sharp rebuff by both Edward I and Philip the Fair. But in theory the pope was still the arbiter of Christendom, seen at his most characteristic when seated on his throne to take counsel with his cardinals (above). *Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

These were sentiments common to all the late Capetians, above all to Philip IV (1285–1314), who brought respect for the dignity of the royal office to a great and formal if sometimes artificial climacteric. Philip the Fair's utter ruthlessness towards any challenge to his authority, whether from pope, the Templars, or adulterous members of his own family, was that of a king who acted, as he is said to have looked, 'not like a man, not like a beast, but like a graven image'. After Philip's death, the kings of France were to suffer every conceivable political and personal humiliation, from capture in battle to complete inbecility. But respect for the divine institution of monarchy was never lost and proved continually capable, as Joan of Arc quite correctly believed, of wresting recovery from disaster.

Capetian government

The crowning achievement of the Capetian Dynasty shortly before its extinction in 1328 was the establishment of a sophisticated system of central administration, the creation of a governmental machine and a state apparatus. The kingdom of France had proved relatively slow, by the standards of the papacy or England, to evolve a fully professionalised central bureaucracy. All the more impressive is Philip the Fair's success in presiding over the rapid development of new administrative agencies during the critical years immediately before and after 1300.

At this period the French kingdom acquired what it had previously lacked except in a very slight form, a fixed geographical centre, a political pivot around which the heterogeneous confederation of semi-autonomous French principalities could begin to revolve. For at least a century before Philip the Fair's accession in 1285 Paris had been the major European city north of the Alps, but it was the new king who made it the incontrovertible political capital of France. In conjunction with an ambitious building programme in the city and the development of a more glamorous and static court life than France had yet experienced, a complex linkup of new or newly adapted government departments was established upon the Ile de la Cité. To institutions of some antiquity like the Chancery and royal household or *Hôtel du Roi*, were added the rapidly expanding supreme French law-court, the *Parlement*, as well as such sophisticated and efficient novelties as the *Chambre des Comptes*.

The heavy jousting helm of the later middle ages, here illustrated from an example in the Musée de Cluny, provided its wearer's head with complete protection. But, as the smaller illustration shows, a lighter helmet or bascinet was much more practical in open combat. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Above: the awesome fate of those French members of the Order of Templars who resisted their suppression by the French monarchy was long remembered as the crowning example of Philip the Fair's intransigent will.
Right: a miniaturist has depicted the marriage of Philip the Fair's eldest son and heir, Louis X. The adulterous misconduct of Louis's wife, Margaret of Burgundy, and of other French princesses provoked the only serious domestic scandal in the history of the late Capetian dynasty—the affair of the Tour de Nesle in 1314. *Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Such developments, as well as many others too complex to be summarised here, were the work of a formidable group of royal counsellors and professional experts, often 'plus royalistes que le roi'. Pierre Flote was described as the most powerful man in France during the twelve-nineties; his successor as keeper of the king's great seal, William Nogaret, won notoriety for himself as well as his master when he kidnapped Pope Boniface VIII at Anagni in September 1303. Many of these Capetian servants originated from a lower social class than the established hierarchy in French church and state: often trained in Roman law and therefore not at the University of Paris where its study was forbidden, they were absolutely committed to the cause of Capetian monarchy. There seems no reasonable doubt, although the subject is still controversial, that they based their practical reforms upon a new conceptual definition of the nature of royal authority in France. Philip the Fair clearly wished to emulate the example of his saintly grandfather; but his more ruthless actions were often justified by arguments, like that of 'necessity of state', which St Louis would have barely comprehended.

The real dynamic behind the governmental reforms of the late thirteenth century was, however, less a new and more 'absolutist' ideology of kingship than Philip's fanatical quest for a larger revenue. The rapid evolution of novel administrative techniques in the financial field was accompanied by a series of ingenious experiments designed to find new forms of taxation. At the calculated risk of provoking outbursts of political resistance, particularly from the papacy, Philip's government imposed a long series of general tenths on the clergy as well as a variety of quota and assessment taxes on the laity. But in the last resort the late Capetians failed to bridge the gap between their massive expenditure and their income. Philip the Fair was condemned to purgatory by his even more famous contemporary, the Italian poet Dante, because of his deliberate devaluation of the French coinage and because of the reputation he enjoyed as a 'false coiner'.

The failure of Philip the Fair and his three sons to find a satisfactory solution to the monarchy's financial problems was to prove its crucial defect during the first phase of the Hundred Years' War. It is symptomatic of its weakness during this critical period that the French kingdom never evolved a regular tradition of national representative assemblies of a type similar to the English parliaments. The occasional experiments in that direction, like the embryonic Estates General of 1302, never took firm root. Perhaps the failure was inevitable. France was a much larger and less manageable political unit than England: it lacked both a gentry class of the English pattern and a strong tradition of 'self-government at the

king's command'. Above all, the inherent strengths of French provincialism, which made it easier for both king and subjects to negotiate at the level of local Estates, proved extremely resistant to the effects of supreme royal will.

The wave of spontaneous protest and rioting by the French provincial nobility which followed Philip the Fair's death in 1314 pointed an obvious moral. There had been a genuine 'revolution in government' during the preceding decades, but this new administrative centre had been imposed somewhat arbitrarily and artificially over the realities of the French political scene. On the eve of the Hundred Years' War, as so often in the future, France was an 'over-governed' country in which the principles of state management lay somewhat uneasily above a still profoundly divided society. Edward III was soon to show how much more readily he could mobolise the wealth and manpower of his three or four million subjects than could his French rivals tap the resources of a larger, richer and more populous kingdom of perhaps twenty million inhabitants.

The accession of the Valois

When Philip the Fair died in 1314 the continuity of the Capetian dynasty as the leaders of the most powerful political unit in western Europe seemed well assured. Philip was the father of three healthy and vigorous sons, each of whom in turn succeeded to the crown of France: Louis X 'the Quarrelsome' reigned from 1314 to 1316, Philip V 'the Tall' from 1316 to 1322 and Charles IV 'the Fair' from 1322 to 1328. Despite some difficulties in coping with the problems of French provincialism and court intrigue, the three brothers were largely successful in preserving the prestige of their family and the administrative legacy inherited from their father. But all failed in the primary duty of a hereditary monarch: not one proved himself able to produce a male heir.

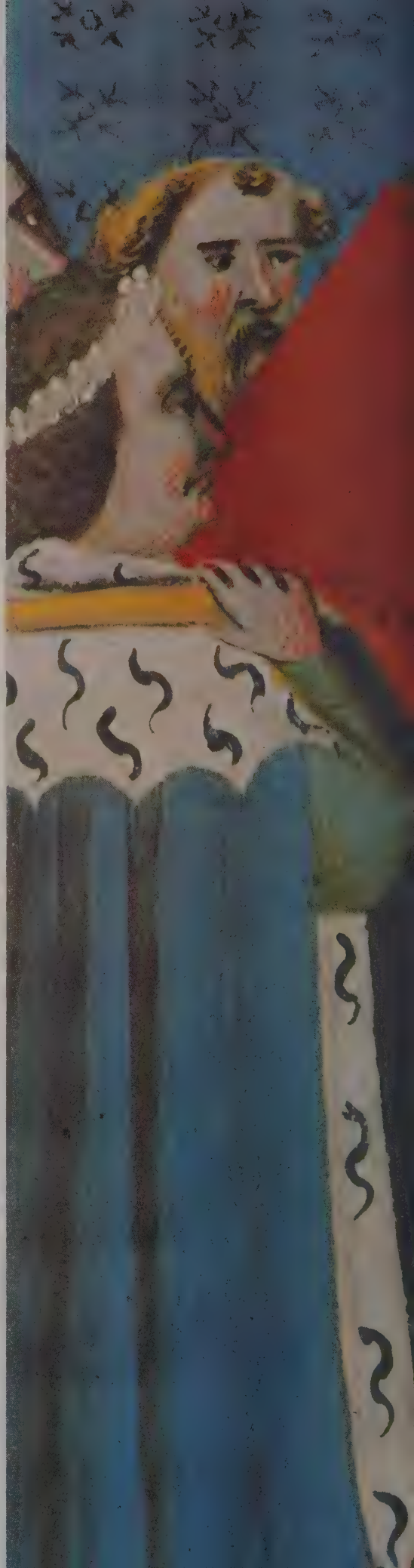
So, by a curious irony, the genealogical good fortune of the Capetian dynasty, their greatest single advantage over other west European rulers since 987, now deserted them not once but three times. It was indeed the absence of any previous succession disputes in the history of the French monarchy that made the crises of 1316, 1322 and 1328 so controversial and potentially explosive. In these three years the French prelates, magnates and university scholars who debated—at great length and in reasonably good faith—the question of the succession to the crown had neither precedent nor law to guide them. The principles of the so-called 'Salic Law', by which it was held that a woman could neither inherit the French crown in her own right nor transmit a claim to the throne to her children, were evolved in the later fourteenth century to justify the *coups d'état* which replaced the Capetian by the Valois kings.

One general principle does underlie the resolution of the succession disputes of 1316, 1322 and 1328: on each occasion the crown was acquired by the 'strong man' of the year, the candidate who seemed, because of a previous position of governmental authority, most likely to provide effective kingship. Accordingly in January 1317 Philip V, Regent of France for the five months since the death of his elder brother, had himself crowned at Reims at the expense of his niece Margaret, Queen of Navarre. When Philip died in his turn five years later leaving only five daughters, he was similarly succeeded—with relatively little demur—by his younger brother Charles, the last Capetian king of France.

On Charles IV's death in February 1328 history repeated itself yet again, but now in a different context. This time the only alternative to a Capetian queen or her descendants was a non-Capetian king. In April an assembly of French barons cut the Gordian knot with commendable speed and decisiveness. They chose as their monarch Philip Count of Anjou and Valois, first cousin of the last Capetian kings. This first Valois king, Philip VI (1328–1350), was, by all the pragmatic tests of the year, much the most realistic choice. He was thirty-four years old, a great-grandson of St Louis, experienced in both French and European politics, and had already begun to exercise effective royal power as Regent of France.

The unanimity with which the French nobility accepted their first Valois king in 1328 nevertheless proved deceptive. Philip VI was always to remain a victim of the circumstances of his own accession. Although it would be unjust to describe him as a usurper, he undoubtedly suffered from the weaknesses of a usurping king. For at least a generation after 1328 the Valois monarchy forfeited part of the unquestioning loyalty enjoyed by the Capetians. In 1328 Philip VI had been compelled to make concessions to several members of the aristocracy, particularly the Dukes of Burgundy, in return for their support. Such support still had to be carefully cultivated after the reign began: Philip was never as free an agent as his predecessors.

Moreover, the accession of the Valois inevitably antagonised the other contenders for the throne in 1328. Of these Philip, Count



After his condemnation as a traitor by his kinsman, Philip VI of Valois, Robert of Artois fled to the English court, where he set himself to persuade Edward III to make good his own claim to the French throne. Robert played a prominent role in the early campaigns of the Hundred Years' War before being killed in Brittany in 1341. *Edward III was one of the pall-bearers at his funeral in London (right). Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

The famous picture on the right occupies the second folio of the manuscript Actes du Procès de Robert d'Artois, *now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It shows Philip V and his council passing judgement on the disinherited and discontented Robert of Artois in* 1322. *Below the royal throne and the groups of lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries, the* 'gens du parlement', *the monarchy's most expert lawyers, sit on the ground.*
Left: An equestrian duel. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

of Evreux initially seemed the most formidable, for he was not only the senior surviving nephew of Philip the Fair but had married Joan of Navarre, Louis X's eldest daughter and arguably the rightful Queen of France since 1316. Philip's claim to the French throne was never entirely forgotten, and after his death in 1343 it was inherited by his eldest son Charles, King of Navarre, whose ambitious conspiracies continued to undermine Valois power for at least the next twenty years. Much more dangerous, however, was the challenge presented by Edward III of England (1327–1377), whose claim to the crown rested on the fact that his mother, Isabella, was the daughter of Philip the Fair.

The origin of the war

At the time of Philip of Valois's accession in 1328 Edward III was only sixteen years old, a new king under the tutelage of his mother, Isabella. After an initial protest Edward showed himself ready to recognise the *fait accompli*. In the summer of 1329 he travelled to Amiens cathedral in order to render his personal act of homage to Philip VI. For several years thereafter Edward allowed his claim to the French throne to remain dormant. For obvious reasons it was never completely forgotten. Opinion is still divided as to whether Edward III ever seriously expected to become King of France; but his title to the crown could always be relied upon to embarrass the Valois diplomatically, and to exploit any tension within the French kingdom.

Throughout its course the Hundred Years' War showed many of the characteristics of a series of civil wars within the kingdom of France. Edward III's great advantage in the late thirteen-thirties, like that of Henry V eighty years later, was that he could present himself as an alternative king to dissident sections of the French aristocracy and bourgeoisie. His claim to the throne offered the discontented nobleman legal justification for acts of rebellion against the Valois monarchs. In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of hostilities Edward's court became a centre of refuge for men like Robert, Count of Artois, who fled to England in 1334 after a violent quarrel with Philip VI and his ally, the Duke of Burgundy. According to Froissart, it was Robert of Artois's advocacy which eventually convinced Edward of the attractions of a full-scale military intervention across the Channel. Modern historians have certainly underestimated the powerful pressures towards war, exerted on Edward by political groups within the French kingdom.

There were, however, many other reasons why war between England and France always seemed likely. As we have seen, official relations between the two kingdoms had long been strained. The traditional sources of conflict—the role of the English king as Duke of Gascony, overlapping spheres of influence in the county of Flanders, rivalry between English and Norman merchants and sea-captains in the Channel—remained unresolved. But these were familiar problems, apparently no more acute in the first ten years of Edward III's reign than they had been in any previous decade: they should not have too high a place in any list of the 'causes' of the war.

In the last resort the outbreak of war was due to a personal act of will on the part of Edward III. Ever since his marriage to Philippa of Hainault at York Minster in 1328, the young king had been surrounded by a group of highly bellicose courtiers and nobles, strongly influenced by contemporary chivalric ideals. During the first years of the reign it seemed possible that their military ambitions might find a suitable outlet through Edward III's determination to undo the work of Robert Bruce and reduce Scotland to a position of legal subjection to the English king. But a series of strenuous Scottish campaigns ended by bringing him no nearer his objective. In 1336 Edward began to entertain thoughts of armed intervention in France—on the explicit grounds that Valois assistance to the Scots had deprived him of his rightful victory there. But it is hard to resist the conclusion that Edward had now realised the futility of fighting a war of diminishing returns against Scotland: the excitement and profits of successful war might be gained, and much more gloriously, in northern France.

The openings of the war (1337–1345)

Anglo-French war began—as it was to continue intermittently for the next 106 years—against a confused background of feverish diplomatic activity and complicated military preparations. As befitted a conflict which had little unity and owes even its name to the superficial hindsight of later generations of Englishmen and Frenchmen, the Hundred Years' War cannot be said to have begun with a formal 'declaration of war'. Neither Philip VI's confiscation of Edward's Gascon fief in May 1337 nor Edward's own feudal defiance of 'Philip of Valois, who calls himself King of France' a few months later were necessarily decisive. The drift to war was unchecked by adversaries who could not possibly foresee the length, vicissitudes and complexities of the forthcoming struggle.

In 1337, as ever afterwards, the major military problem confronting the two opponents was the need to mobilise a sufficiently large force of troops to take advantage of a relatively short summer campaigning season. As both kings, and not just Edward III, were required to reward their armies by means of regular and substantial wages, military success depended on effective war finance as well as commisariat arrangements. In most years during the early phase of the Hundred Years' War the Valois kings were able to raise an army of up to 10,000 men. But so large a force lacked cohesion and definition. It was liable to mass desertion and could, in any case, never be sustained in the field for more than a few weeks without a ruinous strain on the monarch's finances.

At first sight Edward III's financial problems in launching English military

A year after the coronation of the first Valois, Philip VI, in 1328, *the young Edward III did simple homage to him at Amiens. These two miniatures (that on the right dates from the fifteenth century) depict this ceremony, repeated in more precise terms in* 1331, *when Plantagenet and Valois discussed the possibility of a marriage alliance. Six years later the two kingdoms were on the verge of war. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

expeditions across the Channel seemed even more serious. In time the English king proved himself remarkably adept at exploiting parliamentary tenths and fifteenths, as well as wool customs duties, in the interests of his war expenditure. During the first few years of the war, however, Edward was consistently unsuccessful in obtaining the revenues necessary to sustain his ambitious military designs. His first campaign on the Franco-Flemish border could not be mounted until 1339, and then proved an expensive and abortive failure. At the end of the following year Edward returned from Flanders to England in a state of near-bankruptcy. His reckless borrowing ruined both Italian and subsequently English consortia of money-lenders to the crown and also provoked a constitutional crisis of confidence (1340–1341) in his own kingship. But Edward weathered the storm; there is no greater tribute to his qualities and charm as war-leader than his ability to persuade both his nobility and parliamentary commons to continue to support a war which brought them few material rewards until 1346.

During these first years Edward III was also unable to solve his greatest strategical problem—the most effective point at which to exert pressure on the Valois monarchy. A complicated and costly series of alliances with a varied collection of dukes and counts in the Rhineland and the Low Countries never had much practical effect, and collapsed completely in 1341. The promising opportunity offered by the rise to power in Ghent and Flanders of an Anglophil popular leader, Jacques van Artevelde (1338–1345), eventually proved equally illusory. The English naval victory over a combined French and Catilian fleet at Sluys (June 1340) had little permanent significance in an age when sea-power was a meaningless phrase. Only the outbreak of a particularly complex and vicious succession dispute within the duchy of Brittany, precipitated by the death of Duke John III in 1341, enabled English troops to sustain a limited series of military operations within the confines of the French kingdom.

Crécy and Calais

On 11 July 1346 Edward III, guided by the advice of Geoffrey de Harcourt, a prominent nobleman of the Cotentin recently exiled by Philip VI, landed in Normandy with 15,000 men. At long last French territory had been invaded by a major English force—numerically the strongest expedition ever dispatched by the English government during the whole course of the Hundred Years' War.

Despite the size of his army, Edward's war aims in 1346 seem to have been very limited: he probably planned no more than a slow march across northern France in order to demonstrate his power and prestige. The news of a large French army advancing towards him under the leadership of Philip VI was sufficiently alarming to induce Edward to move rapidly north-east in an attempt to reach the coastal ports near Boulogne. But at Crécy, on the plain at Ponthieu, the English army was compelled to take up a defensive position and prepare to fight. By the evening of 26 August the improbable had happened: Philip VI was in full flight and the French nobility decimated as a result of their own impetuosity.

The battle of Crécy marked a genuine turning point in the history of the Hundred Years' War. In military terms it solved nothing and Edward found himself incapable of bringing the war to a rapid and triumphant conclusion. But he had proved—and that dramatically—that it was possible for an English army to win a crushing victory over its French opponents. The memory of Crécy, assiduously cultivated by contemporary chivalric chroniclers, survived to haunt the imagination and encourage the military aspirations of future English kings and noblemen.

In 1346 Edward III had established a glorious precedent. In the following year he provided his successors with an equally important but more concrete legacy: a gateway into the kingdom of France. The conquest of Calais, which surrendered on 4 August 1347 after a long and arduous siege, was Edward's most lasting military achievement. Henceforward a concrete garrison could be maintained, admittedly at extravagant cost, on French soil. Until its surrender by Queen Mary as late as 1558, Calais provided successive English governments with the opportunity of putting aggressive intention into offensive action.

The collapse of France (1347–1360)

The Battle of Crécy and the successful siege of Calais ensured that Edward III would continue to fight the war, not that he would win it. For six years after the king's triumphant return to London in October 1347, English military efforts languished. Most of the limited resources available were squandered in Brittany at a period when the English economy was temporarily dislocated

by the initial ravages of the Black Death. France suffered even more seriously from the first onslaught of bubonic plague in 1348, a catastrophe which confirmed the provincial and national Estates in their unwillingness to grant war taxation to the Valois king. The death of Philip VI in August 1350 and the accession of his son, John II (1350–1364), replaced a quietly competent if much maligned monarch with one whose suspicious temperament and outbursts of vindictive rage further exacerbated the serious tensions within the French aristocracy.

The fragility of Valois control over the French kingdom was brutally exposed in 1355 and 1356 when John II proved himself unable to resist a series of simultaneous marauding raids launched at various parts of his domain. Edward's own sortie from Calais in the autumn of 1355 was succeeded in the following spring by an attack on Normandy. Meanwhile, Edward's eldest son and heir, the Black Prince, established himself in Bordeaux with the object of leading large plundering expeditions into southern and central France. On his return south from the second of these raids, the Black Prince was overtaken by the French army and compelled—like his father ten years earlier—to stand and fight. The Battle of Poitiers (19 September 1356), where a force of 6,000 English troops sustained the attack of a larger French army, was an even more resounding success than Crécy. Among the many French lords in English hands at the end of the day was the French king himself, soon conveyed to London as the most remarkable trophy of the war.

The loss of the Valois king and the need to find large sums of money with which to pay his ransom brought royal authority within France to the point of complete collapse. The Estates of Languedoil, summoned to Paris in order to vote subsidies, seized the opportunity to make a violent attack on the maladministration of the French government. More sinister was the uneasy alliance between Charles of Navarre, Robert le Coq, Bishop of Laon, and Étienne Marcel, provost of the merchants of Paris, a popular leader prepared to use riot and terror in order to gain his ends. In May 1358 moreover the area south-east of Paris experienced the full horrors of a peasant revolt, the *Jacquerie*.

Gradually the forces of conservatism rallied around the person of John II's heir, the young Dauphin Charles. The *Jacquerie* was brutally suppressed, Marcel assassinated (July 1358), and a modicum of law and order restored.

The failure of Edward III to exploit the abasement of the French monarchy in the crisis years of 1356–1358 provides eloquent testimony to his inability to fight the war to a finish. In an attempt to achieve a total victory he led his own last great raid into northern France in October 1359. Although a magnificent display of English power, this expedition too failed to produce a decisive result. It finally came to an end in May 1360 at the little village of Brétigny near Beauce, where the Dauphin and the Black Prince agreed on provisional peace terms.

The resulting treaty of Brétigny-Calais (1360) concluded the first major phase of the Hundred Years' War. Although Edward III temporarily renounced his claims to full sovereignty over the kingdom of France, he was acknowledged as supreme lord of a vastly enlarged duchy of Aquitaine in the south-west, as well as of Ponthieu, Calais and the county of Guines in the north. In addition, the French committed themselves to paying no less than three million gold *écus* (£500,000 sterling) as ransom for their king, John II. The nine years of relative Anglo-French peace which followed were however the consequence of war-weariness and justifiable nervousness on the part of John II and his son Charles. The treaty of Brétigny itself never had any future as a permanent peace settlement. The Valois had been humiliated without being deprived of their means of eventual resistance.

Edward III's victory at the naval battle of Sluys in 1340 *put a temporary end to the dangerous activities of French ships in the English Channel. Much more sensational was Edward's triumph at Crécy six years later, the scene of the most famous of all confrontations between the English long-bow and the Genoese cross-bow. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

The art of war

'When the noble Edward first gained England in his youth,' wrote Jean le Bel, the most famous chronicler of the first phase of the Hundred Years' War, 'nobody thought much of the English, nobody spoke of their prowess and courage . . . Now, in the time of the noble Edward, who has often put them to the test, they are the finest and most daring warriors known to man.'

More than 600 years later, the sustained military superiority of the English expeditions over their French adversaries remains astonishing. The greatest, if most obvious, advantage of the English troops was that the war took place almost exclusively on French soil. From this fact alone it followed that the prizes and profits of war normally fell to Edward III whereas the kingdom of France bore its devastation and suffering. Once an English force had crossed the Channel its solidarity and cohesion were well assured. Fighting in hostile territory, English troops developed an *esprit de corps* which usually proved decisive.

Whether the English soldier enjoyed any technical superiority over his French adversary is much more open to question. The age of Crécy and Poitiers saw no dramatic revolution in the traditional arts of making war. Cannon were used by Edward III at

Crécy, but only became effective military weapons in the early fifteenth century. In both England and France the mid-fourteenth century witnessed a transition from chain-mail towards plate armour, but this was too gradual a process ever to give either side a decisive advantage. Admittedly the slow rate of fire of the French or Genoese cross-bow made it a less practical missile weapon than the much-vaunted English long-bow. But the advantages of the latter must not be overestimated; it could be decisive (as at Crécy and Poitiers) only when defending an entrenched position against a direct frontal attack and in the hands of skilled archers.

The difficulties involved in transporting companies of men and horses across the Channel were very considerable. Despite several blunders, some maladministration and much corruption, Edward III's government was generally remarkably successful in solving problems of recruitment, supply and transport. The king himself was ideally suited to the role of a great fourteenth-century war-leader. Despite recent attempts to prove the contrary, he was no great strategist and usually had no precisely defined military or indeed political objectives. But in an age when overseas military ventures were prejudiced by inadequate knowledge of the terrain and at the mercy of prevailing winds, these apparent demerits were in fact advantages. Edward possessed the essential qualities of the 'happy warrior': he enjoyed fighting himself, used his personal charm to win the confidence and loyalty of his nobles and knights and, above all, showed himself willing to delegate authority to his local war captains in the field.

Edward therefore fostered a deliberately informal and decentralised attitude to war. The typical military operation of the fourteenth century was the *chevauchée* or armed raid, conducted by a few hundred and occasionally by a few thousand men under the leadership of a skilled commander. Sometimes the *chevauchée* might lead, nearly always by accident, to a major pitched battle; but its primary objectives were plunder, devastation and a display of military strength. Until 1416–17, when Henry V decided upon a series of slow sieges of Norman towns, the Hundred Years' War was characterised by a series of extremely mobile expeditions in which a small *cadre* of fighting men inflicted considerable damage while proving almost impossible to intercept or capture. These companies or *routes*, often irresponsive to superior authority, were both the scourge of France and the effective military units of the war.

War and chivalry

The length and vicissitudes of the Hundred Years' War are incomprehensible unless it is understood that the leading combatants on both sides positively desired to fight—within the context of a complicated series of military assumptions, conventions and ideals. As Froissart, the most famous spokesman for such ideals, wrote: 'Mankind is divided into three classes: the valiant who face the perils of war to advance their persons and increase their honour; the people who talk of their successes and fortunes; and the clerks who write down and record their great deeds.'

For contemporaries the best, and perhaps the only, justification for the war was that by providing a long and splendid series of opportunities for individual 'feats of arms', it put the all-important chivalric qualities to the test. These qualities themselves were in essence those common to all military élites during periods of continued war. Like the Homeric hero or Japanese samurai, the fourteenth-century knight placed a high premium on personal bravery or *prouesse*, a type of courage which included the willingness to carry out audacious, dangerous and, if necessary, foolhardy exploits. Intense loyalty towards the fellow-members of one's

Above left: the story of the six burghers of Calais who, through the intervention of Queen Philippa of Hainault, saved their city from the wrath of Edward III in 1347 *is one of the most dramatic if least reliable of Froissart's anecdotes.*

The years of Edward's triumphs at Crécy and Calais coincided with a period in which Flanders gradually reverted to political subordination to the French monarchy. Louis de Male, Count of Flanders, reasserted his control over Ghent (right) *after the assassination of Jacques van Artevelde in* 1345. *But when John 'the Good' was crowned as second Valois King at Reims in* 1350 (left), *his authority in much of northern and south-western France was very insecure. At Poitiers in* 1356 *John 'the Good' was taken prisoner by the English (above). Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

exclusive company or caste was also essential, and can be seen at a developed stage within the Black Prince's entourage in Gascony during the fifties and sixties of the thirteenth century.

To these familiar ideals, fourteenth-century chivalry added its own characteristic appurtenances and trappings. The great war-horse or *dextrarius*, in increasingly short supply as the war progressed, was even more valued as a status symbol than an instrument of war. A rapid expansion in the science of heraldry and a remarkable increase in the number of heralds reflected an increasing obsession with the nuances of the social order. During the early years of Edward III, the English court was opened, as never before, to the influence of the originally southern French ideal of courtly love: both the king's wife, Queen Philippa of Hainault, and his daughter-in-law, Joan of Kent, brought great talent to their roles as conventional *grandes dames*, presiding benignly over the fortunes of their knights. Both the English and the French kings cleverly exploited the popularity of the highly formal and extravagant vow to perform an honourable deed of arms by founding the exclusive military orders of the Garter and the *Chevaliers de l'Etoile*.

It need hardly be said that chivalric ideals, like religious ideals at all periods, were never completely achieved in practice. As most contemporaries were well aware, many chivalric practices—like the numerous challenges to personal combat interchanged between the Plantagenet and Valois kings—were merely formal and stereotyped gestures.

Above: the repression that followed the putting down of the Marcel conspiracy and the Jacquerie *of the same year was—according at least to the vivid imagination of Froissart and other chroniclers—exceptionally severe and brutal. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*
Right: this miniature, produced at a date much later than the event it depicts, a group of Valois and Plantagenet envoys—all distinguished clergy—immersed in the intricate discussion of peace-terms which characterised the subsequent four years. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

But it would be a mistake to regard chivalry as nothing more than a veneer which overlaid an unscrupulous and brutal war. Chivalric theory and military practice often complemented each other extremely well. It was not only honourable, according to the international 'Law of Arms', to spare the life of a defeated knightly adversary: because of the prevalence of a systematically organised traffic in ransoms, it was profitable too.

The *chevauchée* itself had a chivalric as well as a military rationale. A small and highly mobile mounted raid provided the optimum conditions for the performance of deeds of valour. In this way military operations themselves might be converted into a series of hand-to-hand jousts and skirmishes. French and English knights learnt the art of war in the highly artificial context of the tournament: as a consequence official periods of warfare are often impossible to distinguish from the innumerable tournaments which preceded and accompanied them. Whenever possible war itself was transformed into a perpetual tournament.

The effects of the war

Considerable controversy continues to surround the effects of the war on the economy and society of France and England. Even more than in the case of the German Thirty Years' War, it seems impossible to isolate the results of military operations from those of more profound economic forces like population decline, falling production and rising wages. By its very nature the Hundred Years' War—a long, rambling but spasmodic war conducted over a very large area—is difficult to assess in terms of human suffering. It is impossible to know how many people died as a result of the war, or even the number of those engaged in the war effort on either side.

Some sections of English society clearly did make material gains during the first phases of the war. Military preparations

The life of a popular leader in medieval Europe was always dangerous and usually short. Étienne Marcel, the provost of the Parisian merchants, was assassinated in July 1358 *after a few months of great power. Despite this illustration, Marcel seems to have met his death by being struck down in the street while returning from an inspection of the fortifications of Paris. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Right: these statues of Charles V and Joan of Bourbon from the church of Celestines in Paris (now at the Louvre) were partly the work of André Beauneveu, the most famous French painter of the period. (Copy in the Musée des Monuments Français.)

Above: the coronation of Charles V and Joan of Bourbon. The royal majesty of Charles V, like that of his predecessors, reached its apogee when he solemnly received the ceremonial homage of his nobles (left). *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

were inevitably concentrated in the south-east of the country and accordingly set the seal on London's slow evolution 'from commune to capital'. Edward III's urgent need for war finance led to a great expansion in the number of parliamentary subsidies, and hence ensured that the English parliamentary commons would play a more rather than less integral role in national politics. The English government's massive exploitation of the country's most important export trade by means of a variety of heavy wool-taxes (over which the commons had secured the right to consultation by 1362) had even more significant results. The differential between heavy customs duties of over forty per cent on raw wool and less than five per cent on finished cloth encouraged the trend towards a thriving domestic cloth industry. By the end of the century, England had already become—what it has ever since remained—primarily an exporter of manufactured commodities rather than raw materials.

This transformation of the English economy was not accompanied by any profound social revolution. In the first instance the profits of successful war tended to fall into the hands of the established aristocracy and, above all, of the king's own relatives. As a career open to talent, war did of course raise the fortunes of several obscurely born military captains. But remarkably few of these military adventurers or their counterparts, the bourgeois entrepreneurs, forced their way into the higher reaches of the English nobility. Those who did so had already invested their newly acquired capital in landed estates and adopted the traditional behaviour pattern of the existing aristocracy. Sir Walter de Manny (died 1372), a Hainaulter who was probably the most competent of all Edward III's war captains, used his wealth to promote the foundation of the London Charterhouse in 1367–1368.

In France too the disasters of the period between Crécy and Poitiers dislocated the economic order without inaugurating a major social transformation. Though certain areas—Artois, Picardy, parts of Brittany and Normandy and, above all, the Bordelais—suffered severely at the hands of English troops and companies of marauding *routiers*, a relatively primitive system of arable farming showed itself remarkably resilient: rapid recovery from the immediate effects of military devastation was apparent throughout most of France during the

The glorious but often inaccurate memory of the achievements of Constable Bertrand Du Guesclin (Charles V's most famous servant) continued to feed the imagination of French miniatures until the sixteenth century. This illustration of the Constable's siege of Brest, characteristically unsuccessful, depicts plate armour and halberds of a type unknown in Du Guesclin's own lifetime. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

thirteen-sixties. Ultimately more serious and pervasive were the long-term ills caused by governmental debasement of the coinage. In 1345–1347, and more severely still in 1356–1358, the Valois kings precipitated a major monetary crisis as well as general inflation by their devaluation of the French currency in an attempt to raise the revenues with which to meet the English challenge.

The failure of the first two Valois kings to solve their financial problems is indeed the central theme of the period. Philip VI and John II lacked the resources with which to reward their subjects as well as to defeat their English adversary. They were accordingly powerless to hold in check the ever-present separatist and centrifugal tendencies of the French nobility. There were several occasions in the years which followed Poitiers when it seemed possible that the political unity of the French kingdom might suffer a complete collapse—even without benefit of further English intervention.

Charles V and the recovery of France

For de Tocqueville the reign of the third Valois king, Charles V (1364–1380), was decisive for the history of France: it marked the period when the *ancien régime*, which survived until 1789, was born. Despite the political disasters of the fifty years after his death, Charles's achievements were never completely sacrificed. Often seriously ill, emaciated, unable to ride a horse into battle, no French king could have been less prepossessing: none was more influential.

In the first place Charles V showed himself able to call upon the latent reserves of loyalty towards the French crown. Like St Louis, he laid great stress on the duties and sacramental nature of his kingly office; like Philip the Fair, he deliberately encouraged the elaboration of a sophisticated and centralised government machine based on Paris. But Charles's own greatest contribution to the cause of French monarchy was his success in solving the financial problems which had crippled his two predecessors. He forced his subjects to accept, in fact if not always in theory, the principle that the king had a right to demand extraordinary taxation from them. A complex series of administrative expedients and financial levies, of which the hearth-tax and the *gabelle* or salt-tax were the most lucrative, made the king of France the richest sovereign in western Europe.

By contrast Charles V's achievements in the military sphere were singularly unimpressive. The memory of his father's humiliation at Poitiers seems to have had a permanently inhibiting effect on a king who took no personal pleasure in the conduct of war. The weakness of English control in south-western France had long been evident before Charles allowed himself, under pressure from Gascon noblemen at odds with the Black Prince, Prince of Aquitaine from 1362 to 1372, to provoke a renewal of Anglo-French war in 1369. During the succeeding eleven years all the major military initiatives were taken by the English rather than the French. It was the growing political unity of the Valois kingdom and not its military superiority which rendered these initiatives powerless to prevent the gradual erosion of English authority in France. There is perhaps no more striking testimony to Charles V's military incapacity than his choice of an impoverished Breton captain of *routiers*, Bertrand Du Guesclin, as Constable of France. Despite his posthumous fame, Du Guesclin consistently failed to display the strategic sense or military decisiveness which would have swept the English out of the kingdom.

In the last resort, therefore, Charles V failed to make quite the most of his great opportunities. Although at the time of his death in 1380 English domains in France had been reduced to a few Channel ports and a coastal strip near Bordeaux, the war still continued. On the other hand, it seemed to all intelligent contemporaries that France had now resumed her traditional supremacy among the powers of western Europe. Not only was south-eastern England experiencing the horrors of war at first-hand through the agency of naval raids by joint Franco-Castilian fleets; in 1377 the death of the long-senile Edward III and the succession of his ten-year-old grandson, Richard II (1377–1399) added the problems of a minority to those of baronial faction and war-weariness. By contrast, the kingdom of France was enjoying a cultural as well as economic revival. Only the future was to reveal the fragility which underlay the remarkable intellectual renaissance and political stability of Charles V's reign.

Town and countryside

A population explosion in European towns; new implements mean better crops; peasant and noble fall into the hands of the Jews; famine and revolt in Europe; the scourge of the Black Death; depression hits the medieval economy; striking the balance between town and country.

One of the most striking features of medieval Europe is the contrast between its outward unity and its inner division. This appears very clearly in its economy. On the one hand, there was a flourishing international commerce, following well-worn routes and linking the great cities of medieval Europe; and, on the other, there was the half-closed economy of much of the countryside, where communications were poor and money was scarce.

Town and countryside correspond very roughly to those two aspects of the medieval economy. This does not mean, however, that a rigid division should be drawn between town and countryside: even the largest towns had orchards and gardens, and many even had their own fields. Towns were of all shapes and sizes; they varied from the great cities of Flanders and Italy to market towns that were scarcely distinguishable from villages, and they were at widely differing stages of economic development. This makes it difficult to trace the economic history of medieval Europe, for one is always in danger of forgetting that the pace of economic change varied from place to place. The causes of economic change in the middle ages are rarely clear; but the relations of town and countryside do seem to offer a key, because the development of the medieval economy depended to a very large extent on bringing together the wealth of the countryside and the trade of the towns.

The years of expansion

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries have left an impression of prosperity: they were a time of economic expansion. The merchants of the Hansa acquired a virtual monopoly of the Baltic trade, while the Italians dominated the Mediterranean. Safe markets were won in Russia and the Levant, and were to be one of the foundations of industrial growth in Flanders and Italy. The increasing importance of the Italians in international trade was underlined in 1252, when first Genoa and then Florence issued a gold coinage. That of Florence was the more successful, and was soon to supplant the failing Byzantine coinage as the basis of international credit and exchange.

Europe's thriving commerce was reflected in the growth of towns. Not only were new towns founded in almost all parts of Europe, but many towns, both great and small, were bursting out of their walls. New lines of fortifications had to be constructed

Above: during the twelfth century it became common for transactions to be recorded in writing. A charter would be drawn up, summarising what had been agreed verbally; it would then be cut in two, and each of the contracting parties would receive half; this could serve as a title-deed and could be produced in court. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

By the middle of the twelfth century the nobility were seen as a caste above the rest of society; they were the secular equivalent of the priesthood. This had come about as the result of the fusion of the pagan idea of the nobility of certain families and the Christian notion of the duty of a knight. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale. Paris.)

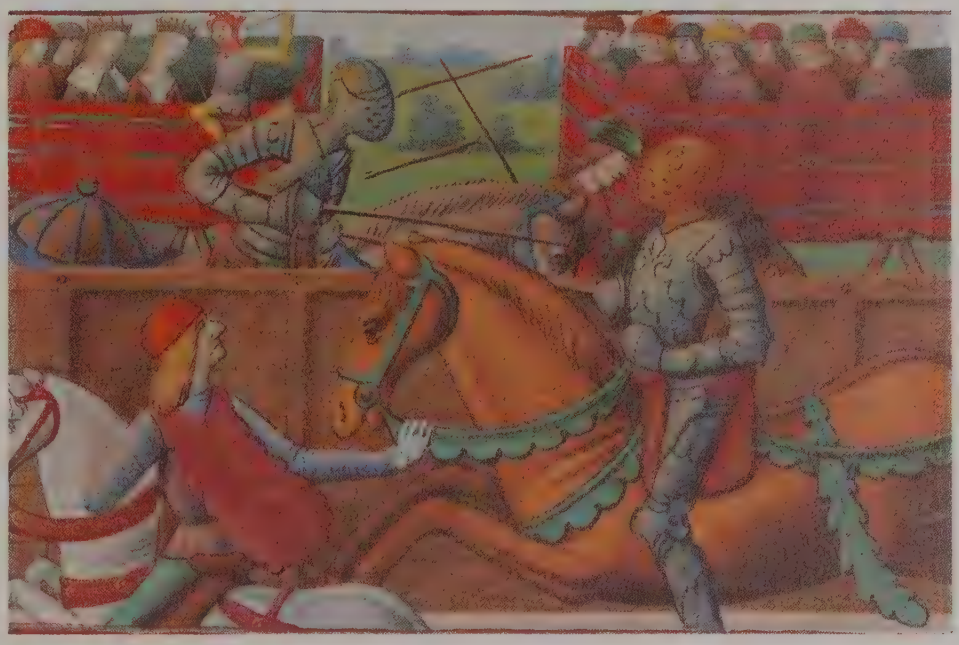
to shelter their expanding suburbs. The countryside too was apparently prosperous, for the growing urban market ensured rising prices for agricultural produce.

The foundations of prosperity

The wealth of medieval Europe was founded on its agriculture, which was very largely geared to arable farming. Since about the turn of the tenth century great progress had been made in the clearing of land. This was reaching its height in western Europe during the twelfth century: on both sides of the North Sea coastal marshes were being drained and brought under cultivation; in Lombardy the marshlands of the Po Valley were in the process of being reclaimed; everywhere the remaining forests and wastes were under attack, and the most inhospitable regions began to be settled. At the same time, as we have seen, colonisation was begun in the Slav lands beyond the Elbe, and it gathered force during the thirteenth century.

The initial cause of this great movement is not at all clear; it was probably compounded of a variety of factors. Among the most important were overpopulation in certain areas, and the ending of the period of invasions. Once begun, however, it gathered speed under the impetus of the growing population that pioneer conditions demanded. It is not possible to say exactly how great or how rapid this growth of population was. Obviously it varied from place to place, but all the signs are that it was of considerable proportions. New parishes had to be carved out of old ones, and chapels had to be provided for new settlements. The numbers of tenants on some estates increased enormously. On the estates of the bishop of Worcester, for example, they went up by sixty-five per cent between 1182 and 1299.

The economic growth of Europe in the middle ages was above all a question of increased land under cultivation and of growing population, but it was also helped by some improvements in agricultural techniques. By the end of the thirteenth century, and in some places possibly long before, the open-field system with its three course rotation of crops had been perfected in those regions of northern Europe best suited to arable farming. During the twelfth century there seems to have been a general increase in the number of plough teams, while a more advanced plough with coulter and mouldboard came into wider use. Tools were increasingly made of iron. Where these improvements were adopted, the soil could be prepared much more thoroughly; and this presumably produced more corn.



The tournament was one of the highlights of aristocratic society. By the end of the middle ages it had developed a very involved etiquette. This late fifteenth-century miniature shows Charles VII of France (1421–1461) *jousting on the occasion of his niece's wedding. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

Natural resources

Land was the most valuable of Europe's natural resources, but among others there were, of course, supplies of timber, and water in abundance. With the construction of water-mills a valuable source of power could at last be properly exploited. The water-mill seems to have been invented about the beginning of the Christian era, probably in Syria. It spread only slowly to western Europe, but by the end of the eleventh century very great numbers of water-mills had been built, as Domesday Book shows in the case of England. The windmill harnessed another source of power. This too seems to have come from Syria; the first European examples date from the end of the twelfth century.

Medieval Europe was comparatively well supplied with minerals. About 1170 rich silver deposits were discovered in Saxony; these supplemented the mines of the Harz mountains, which had been worked since the tenth century. The Alps were also a region of great mining activity; gold and silver were extracted, and base metals too were mined. From Germany, as we have seen, miners fanned out into central Europe to work the mines of Bohemia and Hungary. England was well endowed with mineral resources: the south-west provided silver, tin, and lead; and elsewhere there were deposits of iron, coal, and lead. Most parts of Europe possessed local iron-workings; the richest were in northern Spain, the eastern Alps, and Sweden.

The commercial revolution

Another aspect of Europe's economic expansion during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was the growth of towns. This was closely bound up with developments in the countryside, for towns relied on the surrounding district for their supplies of foodstuffs and other raw materials. They also drew a very large proportion of their inhabitants from neighbouring villages. It was, however, a two-way process: the growing towns gave added stimulus to agricultual expansion, and the prosperity of the countryside soon came to depend more and more on the presence of urban markets.

In northern Italy this was transformed during the eleventh and twelfth centuries into direct control of the countryside by the towns. The institution responsible for this was the urban commune, a body of private citizens sworn to uphold common interests. With a greater or lesser degree of violence, it was grafted on to existing municipal institutions, and it became the holder of real political power within the city. Its chief aim was to further the city's commercial prosperity, for which domination of the countryside was considered an essential.

The communal movement was much less successful in northern Europe. In England and France it was carefully controlled by the royal government. The situation was confused in Germany, but the cities of the Hansa and the Rhineland were able to obtain a considerable degree of independence. In Flanders it was in the count's best interests to allow the towns a large share in

Much of the economic activity of the middle ages was devoted to supplying the needs of the aristocracy. Feasting was an important pastime. Food and wine were consumed in huge quantities, while fools, jugglers, and troubadours entertained. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

their internal government. Political domination of the countryside by the towns was quite another matter. Even so the towns of northern Europe exercised indirect control through their markets.

Towns were the centres of local trade. It was through their markets that the natural wealth of the countryside was turned into something negotiable. Their growing demands meant that local trade, mostly in raw materials, would increase. This brought new wealth to the merchants and the landlords and allowed the rapid growth of long-distance trade.

International trade never completely came to a standstill, not even in the darkest days of the invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries. There was always some demand among the nobility and the Church for the precious cloths, spices, and drugs imported from the Levant and for the wax and furs of eastern Europe. Until the twelfth century the West had little to offer in return except raw materials, and large amounts of gold and silver had to be found to pay for the imports. This in itself limited the volume of long-distance trade, which was also restricted by the lack of integration between the various parts of Europe. The result was that the wealth of northern Europe filtered only very slowly into the channels of international trade.

These obstacles were beginning to be overcome in the twelfth century. Much closer contacts were forged between Italy and Flanders with the rise of the fairs of Champagne; these fairs provided a permanent place of exchange between Italy and northern Europe. The growing wealth of northern Europe could now be employed more directly in trade with the Levant. Western merchants also began to dominate

the markets of the Levant and eastern Europe. These provided an outlet for Flemish cloth, and a rapid growth of the Flemish cloth industry followed. Long-distance trade was no longer so dependent on the amount of bullion that western Europe could supply.

The success of the Flemish cloth industry was outstanding, but other trades were also coming to be concentrated in the towns. This development was most marked in Flanders and northern Italy, where the metal, leather, and fur trades were becoming urbanised. The growing importance of industry in the towns is underlined by the appearance of craft guilds alongside the earlier-established provisioning trades.

The organisation of industry in the towns remained rudimentary. It was still for the most part a household activity. But once confined in a small area, the different stages of production could be supervised by a single man, usually a merchant. He bought the raw materials, put them out to the artisans, and marketed the finished product. The artisans often worked in shops rented from the merchant and were paid miserable wages. The system was brutal, but production was swift and cheap.

The direct contribution of industry to urban wealth was comparatively small, for very little value was added to the raw materials in the course of production. Indirectly, however, the presence of industry stimulated the growth of the urban market; there was a greater demand for raw materials to be made up and for foodstuffs to feed the workers. More products were put on the market, and this favoured the expansion of trade, both local and long-distance.

The greater volume of trade demanded changes in the organisation of commerce. The comparative lack of money and its slow circulation were among the main obstacles to the swift growth of commerce. These began to be overcome from the turn of the twelfth century by the development of better credit facilities. There were advances in banking methods, and a rudimentary bill of exchange was devised. There was also a tendency to keep clearer accounts.

Progress in business methods stemmed in part from the greater literacy of the merchant class. It was no longer necessary for a merchant to accompany his goods; he could now conduct his affairs from a central office with the aid of correspondents in the cities where he had business. The 'sedentary merchant' could deal with a much greater range and volume of trade than his 'travelling' predecessor. This stage had been reached in Hanseatic trade by the turn of the thirteenth century, but the Italian merchants, above all those of the inland towns of Lombardy and Tuscany, were rather more advanced. The business houses of Siena and Piacenza had already begun to establish permanent branches in some of the main towns of north-western Europe.

The castle became the effective centre of local power. Lords usurped rights that had formerly been exercised by the central government; they were able to claim various rights over the inhabitants of the surrounding region. Men were forced to use their ovens and mills and pay heavily for this privilege. The lords also claimed rights of justice. From the twelfth century castles were built of stone rather than wood. Below: a royal couple. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Symptoms of economic decline

The prosperity of Europe was founded on an expanding agriculture and a fast developing commerce. The towns in a sense played the key role, for they channelled off the surplus wealth of the countryside into trade and industry. Already in the thirteenth century, however, at the height of medieval prosperity, there were signs that conditions favourable to continued economic expansion were coming to an end.

In western Europe the clearing of new lands was being brought to a halt. In the Lincolnshire fens no more land was reclaimed after about the middle of the thirteenth century, when the last great sea dyke was built. There was little good land still available; furthermore, it was more expensive to clear because scarcity had put up the value of forest and waste.

The demand for foodstuffs did not slacken, and the land had in some places to be

farmed more intensively. This could lead to impoverishment of the soil. By the late thirteenth century there was less manure available, for the extension of arable at the expense of the waste and grazing lands meant that proportionately fewer beasts could be kept. The numbers of livestock that a peasant could turn out on the village waste had to be strictly limited; the price of meadowland rose rapidly, and elaborate arrangements had to be made for pasturing livestock on the stubble after harvest. Surveys from some English counties show that at the end of the thirteenth century the peasantry were very badly off for livestock. As a result of the rapid expansion of arable farming, the essential balance between arable and livestock may well have been lost.

In these conditions there was a serious danger that, if population continued to grow at its old rate, it would begin to press very hard on available resources. But there are signs that the rate of increase was falling. Indeed, from about the middle of the thirteenth century the rural population in some parts of Tuscany began to decline slowly but steadily. A similar trend may possibly have existed from the turn of the century in some East Anglian villages.

On the other hand, there were economic and social pressures that aggravated the growing shortage of land and made it difficult for the peasants to adapt themselves to the new conditions. An active land market allowed some peasants to build up holdings that were much larger than the standard ones. These were often subdivided to meet the growing pressure on land. There was greater stability where the standard holdings were maintained, but they tended to stay in the hands of the same family, and this, too, aggravated the problem of overpopulation. In most villages, there were fewer peasants with adequate holdings; the majority had to try to make a living off their smallholdings and wage labour.

Far more serious was the growing pressure exerted in many places by the landlords. This might take many different forms; for the relations between landlord and peasant varied from region to region, from village to village, and even within each village. Above all there was a distinct contrast between conditions in England and those existing in many parts of the continent.

In England many landowners tended to farm their estates directly in order to take advantage of the high prices being paid for agricultural products. They could either cultivate their estates by exacting labour services from their peasants, or, what was more usual, they could employ cheap wage labour and keep such services owed by their peasants as they still found useful; the other services could then be commuted for a money payment which helped meet the cost of wages. The peasant owed a variety of dues to his lord, but perhaps the most burdensome were the entry fines that he had the pay when he took up his holding. The majority of English peasants do not seem to have been legally free. As a result of the work of the Angevin lawyers the legal position of the peasant became better defined. Generally speaking, the peasant was denied access to the royal courts and was justiciable before his lord.

On the Continent direct farming by the landlords was not so marked. It was more usual to rent or lease estates out. This had its disadvantages, for while the value of land was rising the real value of money was falling. On the other hand, rent may only have been a small consideration beside the profits obtained from justice and entry fines. The lords were also able to impose direct taxes on their peasantry. To escape these burdens, many French peasants were willing to purchase charters of liberty from

their lords; but these often left them even more heavily in debt. The peasantry were also weighed down by tithes. This all amounted to a crushing burden; and it has been calculated that in some cases even with good harvests the peasant was left with scarcely enough to support his family, let alone with spare cash to make improvements to his holding.

Very little of a landlord's revenue was put back into his estates; the vast proportion went on conspicuous consumption. This became all the more marked from about the middle of the twelfth century, when the

The middle ages saw improvements in farm implements. The illustration shows the heavier plough with coulter and mould-board which was widely adopted. Oxen continued to be the normal plough beasts; only in northern France were they replaced to any significant extent by the horse.
Right: sheep farming was always an important aspect of medieval farming. Wool was needed to feed the cloth industries of Flanders and northern Italy. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

nobility began to form a closed military caste. Its characteristic way of life demanded heavy expenditure on fine apparel and rare foods and wines. Even the equipment of a knight became more elaborate and expensive. The peasants might benefit from building operations carried on by a lord at his country residence, but the greatest part of his revenue would be spent on luxuries obtainable only in the towns. Many nobles found it very difficult to keep up their aristocratic way of life and fell increasingly into debt either to the Jews or to merchants.

The peasantry were also getting into debt. The Jews of Perpignan carried on a thriving trade lending small sums of money to peasants in surrounding villages. In Tuscany the peasants were also forced to borrow to tide them over to harvest time; these loans were sometimes repaid in the form of a perpetual rent payable in corn or other produce. This was another burden on the peasantry.

The roots of a crisis

Although agriculture was ceasing to expand in western Europe during the thirteenth century, there was no need for trade and industry to stop growing; for an increased proportion of agricultural wealth was finding its way either directly or indirectly to the towns. It was a vicious circle. To pay for their luxuries the landlords had to extract more money or services from their estates; more corn had to be put on the urban market. This led to overfarming and in some places to deteriorating soil. By the turn of the thirteenth century English corn yields were showing a tendency to fall.

Some of the new urban wealth returned to the countryside. Merchants increased their investment in land; it was the only secure investment, and it gave status. Yet in the conditions of the thirteenth century such investments may well have led to a further draining off of the wealth of the countryside into the towns. In northern Italy, and perhaps in Flanders, the cities helped to ease the problem of rural overpopulation. The rapid development of the cloth industry in Florence and Pisa during the second half of the thirteenth century demanded large-scale immigration from the countryside. In this way the city was still very closely attached to the countryside.

Nevertheless, it was becoming possible for expansion in Flanders and northern Italy to go ahead with less and less reference to conditions in the countryside. The growth of royal and especially of papal taxation during the thirteenth century not only added another burden to the others that weighed upon the rural economy; by creating a pool of urban wealth it also gave the Tuscan bankers the necessary security for the rapid development of credit which, as we have seen, was one of the bases of continuing commercial expansion. The presence of overseas markets for cloth allowed the industries of Flanders and northern Italy to develop to a degree out of all proportion to the needs of western Europe.

The Flemish and Italian towns also became less dependent on the surrounding countryside for supplies of food: the strongest tie uniting town and countryside was in danger of being severed. By the middle of the thirteenth century Flanders was importing corn from the Baltic coasts, while the Italian cities were able to obtain cereals not only from southern Italy, but also from the Black Sea region. In Tuscany the city authorities embarked on a deliberate policy of providing cheap corn; this would keep down wages and thus the costs of cloth making. By the early fourteenth century the price of corn was beginning to fall. This cut

Meadowland was extremely scarce in the middle ages and far more valuable than ploughland. The scythe was employed on an increasingly large scale from the fourteenth century and was far more efficient than the sickle (bottom right). Bottom left: an example of a more primitive plough. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

right at the heart of the rural economy of western Europe.

The balance between town and countryside was beginning to be upset. A relatively advanced commercial and industrial structure had been imposed on top of a fairly primitive agriculture. From about the middle of the thirteenth century the advances made in commerce and industry had been increasingly detrimental to the well-being of the countryside. The towns were in a position to overexploit agriculture, which was more and more geared to the urban market. In northern Italy the countryside was forced by the city authorities to bear more than its fair share of taxation. It was becoming clear that policies suitable to an expanding urban economy were harmful to a declining agriculture. This was of course most noticeable in northern Italy, but the increasing control exercised by the Italians over European commerce and credit brought similar problems to north-western Europe.

The agricultural base of the economy was becoming impoverished; the peasantry were increasingly in debt and badly fed. The crisis of the later middle ages was essentially agricultural, but it was to have its repercussions on the urban economy once the towns of Italy and Flanders had lost the protection of safe overseas markets.

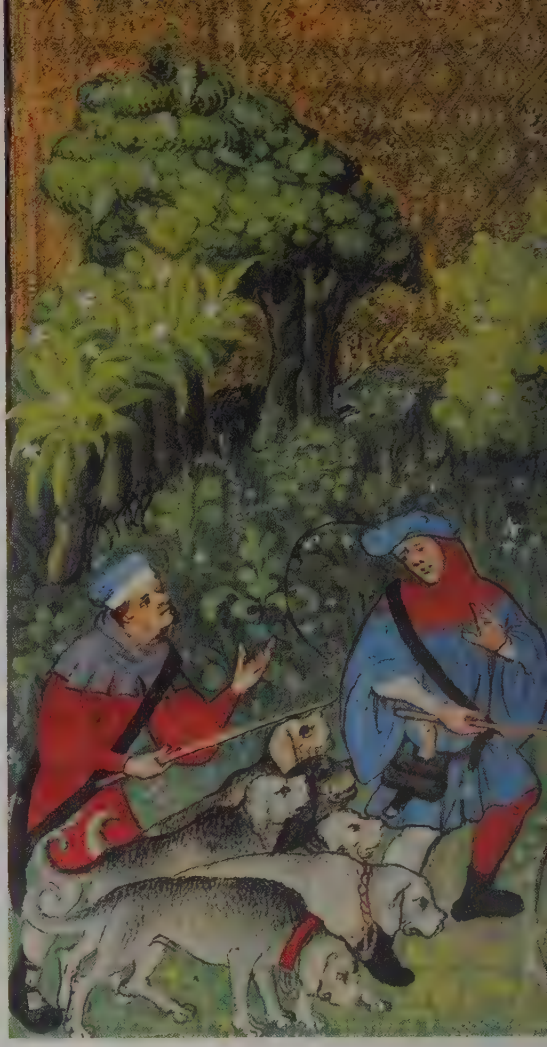
The nature of the later medieval crisis

The seriousness of the situation did not become clear until perhaps the thirteen-forties, but there were earlier signs of impending crisis. From 1309 to 1317 much of western Europe was in the grip of a terrible famine, during which there was considerable loss of life. Corn prices were

beginning to fall, though this was disguised by violent fluctuations that confused the situation still further. Real wages do not seem to have started rising. France and Flanders were faced with severe monetary troubles. The fourteenth century was also a period of revolt by the workers in the towns and by the peasantry in the countryside. Towns decayed; land went out of cultivation, and villages were deserted.

Yet this crisis did not affect all parts of Europe either to the same degree or at the same time. The areas that suffered most were those, such as large parts of France and southern Italy, which were given over almost exclusively to corn production. Though the lands east of the Elbe were another great corn-producing region, they came through the early stages of the crisis almost unscathed, for the land was not overworked and the peasants were not yet

Top: a usurer demands repayment of a loan. In the thirteenth century the peasants were increasingly forced to turn to money-lenders in order to pay the dues they owed to their lord or simply to tide them over to the next harvest. Exorbitant rates of interest were charged; the peasantry became more and more impoverished, hardly able to make ends meet.
Below, left: an illustration taken from Frederick II's treatise on falconry.
Below: pig-rearing was predominantly carried on by the peasantry; the pigs were pastured in the forests where there were acorns in abundance, but with the great clearances the amount of pasture available declined and so did the number of pigs. In this way, too, the livelihood of the peasantry was threatened by the progress of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.
(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)



These illustrations are taken from a fifteenth-century manuscript of the famous treatise on hunting composed by Gaston Phoebus, count of Foix (1343–1391). *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

oppressed by their landlords. From about the turn of the fourteenth century, however, these new lands felt the full weight of the crisis. The losses of the Black Death were not made good; the demand for corn slackened, and clearing was brought to a halt. England and Holland, with more varied agricultures, suffered far less.

The more urbanised parts of Europe did not escape the crisis. The fourteenth century was a period of internal struggles in the Flemish cities, and soon after the middle of the century their industries began to decline. About the same time Hanseatic commerce was contracting. In Tuscany agriculture was disrupted for more than half a century following the disastrous famine and plague of 1339–1340. The great Tuscan cities were faced with industrial, financial, and social difficulties. Some—Lucca, Siena, and Pisa for example—never recovered and went into permanent decline; but Florence profited from their misfortunes and was able to maintain a high degree of prosperity. Northern Italy remained far in advance of the rest of Europe; while a general recovery seems to have begun there from the early fifteenth century, in most other parts of Europe this was delayed until towards the end of the century.

The Black Death

The shape and timing of the crisis depended on local conditions, but in many regions its onset seems to have coincided with the outbreak of the Black Death, a combination of bubonic and pneumonic plague which ravaged Europe from 1347 to 1349. The effects of the plague varied from place to place. Some areas—Holland is perhaps the best example—seem almost completely to have escaped its toll, while elsewhere as much as half the population was carried off.

These losses, however appalling, seem to have been made good very quickly, for the majority of plague victims were apparently drawn from either the aged or the very young. This single visitation of plague was not in itself disastrous; but it was followed over the next fifty years or so by repeated outbreaks, which made rapid recovery almost impossible and further exhausted a population already on the verge of starvation.

The losses sustained during the second half of the fourteenth century were obviously very serious to an economy that depended so much on manpower. In many areas they produced temporary chaos—though this

must not be confused with crisis. It is a little too easy to attribute the economic difficulties of the later middle ages simply to the drastic reduction in population. Its effects were far from uniform. The countryside was no longer overpopulated, and in England and perhaps in France this undermined the landlord's domination over the peasantry. In the lands east of the Elbe, on the contrary, the landlords were able to take advantage of the peasants' difficulties to increase their control over the countryside and gradually to reduce the peasantry to serfdom. In northern Italy the fall of population allowed landowners and entrepreneurs from the towns to build up estates and to dominate the rural economy. The Black Death had the effect of speeding up processes already begun. Thus while in some places it may even have contributed to economic growth, elsewhere its effect was to intensify the crisis and further delay recovery.

The repercussions of war

War was as terrible a scourge as the plague. Its effects were much the same; it increased misery and chaos and favoured trends in the economy and society that were already under way. The Hundred Years' War certainly contributed to the agricultural depression in France, but it helped the development of the English cloth industry, which grew rapidly under the protection afforded by Edward III's war finance. Northern Italy was ravaged by repeated wars in the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; city and countryside alike were terrorised by companies of mercenaries. The outcome of these wars, however, was to affirm the dominance of Florence over Tuscany and of Milan over Lombardy.

Depression in the countryside

The effects of war and plague must not be minimised because they appear to be only secondary. They deepened and gave substance to a crisis that might otherwise have followed a rather milder course. Agriculture might have adapted itself less chaotically to the slackening demand for corn and might have recovered its prosperity rather more quickly, while rural society might have remained more stable and better equipped to cope with the agricultural slump.

The immediate reaction of landlord and peasant alike to the slump in corn prices was to put more corn on the market; this made a bad situation worse. In England the landlords, especially the great ecclesiastical corporations, tried to cut their losses by reintroducing labour services on a wide scale; this aroused deep resentment among their peasantry.

The difficulties of the landlords increased

after the Black Death; the losses of population led to a rapid rise in wages. In all parts of Europe there were attempts to peg wages at pre-plague rates. This intensified the militancy of the peasantry and produced a situation where peasant uprisings were easily sparked off. They were practically always of a local character. Even the greatest of them—the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England—was limited for the most part to the south-east and East Anglia.

In the face of peasant non-cooperation and sometimes violence, the landlords' policy of repression was bound to fail. Wage legislation was rarely strictly enforced. However it was managed, the large estate geared to corn production became increasingly unprofitable. Even the most conservative of landowners were forced to rent or lease out their estates, so as at least to do away with the mounting costs of administration. This had, of course, been

Right: the water-mill was invented at the beginning of the Christian era. By the twelfth century it was in very wide use all over northern Europe. It was mainly employed for grinding corn, but in the course of the next centuries it also came to be used for fulling cloth and for sawing wood. It added greatly to the power at man's disposal.

Above right: with the spread of the horse collar the horse could be used as a draught animal. Carts now became a feasible form of transport; bridges had to be constructed and roads improved. From the early thirteenth century some of the Alpine passes were opened up for cart traffic.
The two men travelling through a mountain pass (left) *have camouflaged themselves. Miniature.* Traité de Chasse de Frédéric II. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

happening on the continent long before the Black Death, while in England the tendency to rely on rents instead of the profits of direct farming was becoming marked on some smaller estates during the early decades of the fourteenth century.

The attachment that existed between a lord and his estates now became weaker. It is exactly at this period that many English estates passed out of the hands of the old families into the possession of new owners; these rarely kept them for more than a generation. The same tendency is also to be seen in some parts of France. The new families were often drawn from the ranks of the prosperous peasantry. Such frequent changes of ownership, especially marked among the smaller landowners, must have contributed to the instability of the countryside.

Where the estates were divided up and passed into the hands of the peasantry, the old system of corn-production geared to the market was normally doomed; for the peasantry must have been forced to fall back on subsistence farming to escape the worst effects of the agricultural depression. In some regions it was even becoming more usual to pay rent owed to a landlord in kind. In this way he protected himself against the constant fluctuations in the value of money.

The less direct control exercised by the landlord and the changes in agriculture shook village life. In many places communal life in the village was threatened. The tendency for some peasants to build up large holdings was now intensified; in England many villages came to be dominated by a few prosperous peasants, who tended to take over the estates when they came to be rented out. This upset the stability of the village community, which had depended on a rough equality among the various classes of peasant holdings; such equality was now fast disappearing.

The Black Death itself does not seem to have brought much disruption to the organisation of village life: the vacant

Above: corn-mills, such as this one on the Seine at Paris, were essential for the great cities, whose growing population consumed huge quantities of corn. Famine was a spectre that hung over all towns, and it was one of the main preoccupations of the city authorities to ensure adequate provisioning. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Left: shipping was rather primitive for most of the middle ages; much of it simply consisted of tiny barques engaged in coastal trade. The seas and the rivers provided the chief means of communication in medieval Europe. Miniature. Traité de Chasse de Frédéric II. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*

holdings were soon taken up by the survivors. After the Black Death, however, it became far less usual for a particular holding to stay in the possession of a single family; this undermined another of the mainstays of village solidarity. It made for greater mobility among the rural population, which the landlords vainly tried to curb. Holdings were now abandoned more easily, and court rolls are full of cases of dilapidation of property. The chaos that resulted made the agricultural crisis more severe and in some cases left a village easy prey for desertion.

The weakening of the village community and of the attachment of a particular family to a holding, as well as intensified rural migration, are developments common to both England and the continent. Nevertheless one must not exaggerate the effects: most villages recovered their stability. The absence of a lord often compelled the peasants to take greater initiative in the regulation of their affairs. In England it became more usual for village bye-laws to be enacted. In Germany there was a further growth of 'mark' communities, associations of peasants bound together to regulate the use of wastes.

The end of the urban boom

The depression of the later middle ages did not pass the towns by. The urban boom continued well into the fourteenth century, but it was increasingly apparent how unstable its foundations were. Western domination of markets in the Levant and Russia was coming to an end. From about the middle of the century western Asia was virtually closed to Italian merchants. Western exports still found their way to these markets, but in smaller quantities; profits fell heavily because the Italians were now forced to work through middlemen. The declining market for cloth and other industrial products, both at home and abroad brought bitter competition. During the fourteenth century Florence was continually at war with its industrial rivals in

Tuscany, while Bruges, Ghent and Ypres stamped out competition from smaller Flemish towns and from the rural cloth industry.

War was one answer to the economic crisis, but it was more usual for towns to adopt a policy of protectionism in an effort to preserve their share of the dwindling market. The gilds increased restrictive practices in the hope of protecting the interests of their members. These policies were, however, the opposite of those that had favoured commercial and industrial expansion; they only led to further decline. In the Flemish cities this change of policy was associated with a change of government. There was a bitter conflict between the merchant-class that had grown rich on long-distance trade and the weavers, who favoured a protectionist policy and tried to guard against the decline of the long-distance trade by ensuring absolute domination over the local market. The surrounding countryside was brought under direct political control. The dangers are clear. The urban boom had been largely possible because commerce and industry had not been closely tied to the local market. Now the situation was reversed.

The expansion of commerce had been founded to a very large extent on the extension of the credit system. Its frailty was exposed in 1343 by the bankruptcy of the two greatest Florentine business houses, those of the Bardi and the Peruzzi; the kings of Naples and England had been unable to honour their debts. The confidence on which trade depended was shattered; and

This sixteenth-century drawing of Moulins gives an admirable impression of a late medieval town: houses huddled together within the walls, with suburbs sprouting outside the gates. Many of the houses are substantial buildings; they are a sign of the rising standards of comfort that men were beginning to demand in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Miniature. Armorial d'Auvergne. *(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)*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Many of the great towns of medieval Europe stood at strategic river crossings; some, such as London and Paris, were famous for their bridges. One of the bridges of Paris is portrayed right. Miniature. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

Right: the standard of living in medieval Europe was pitifully low, but increasing contact with the Levant taught the inhabitants of western Europe some of the refinements of the East. Public baths were probably introduced as a result of Muslim influence.
Left: a woman warming herself. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

credit was thereafter controlled more tightly.

Towns were forced back more and more on their local markets; but with agriculture impoverished and dislocated, these usually had little to offer. Many towns tried to guard against the chaos in the countryside by restricting immigration. This was to have disastrous consequences, especially after the Black Death had decimated the urban population, for the towns depended on immigration from the countryside to keep up their numbers. Few reliable population statistics survive from the later middle ages, but these point to a decline in the urban population.

This decline contributed to the lessening importance of the urban corn market. The corn market was also undermined in another way: townspeople relied increasingly on the direct supply of food from the countryside rather than trust to the workings of the market. The tendency can be seen in an extreme form at Toulouse, which reverted during the later middle ages to a semi-agricultural state. Though people in the towns could shield themselves thus from the fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products, it meant that the urban market no longer exercised such tight control over agriculture. One of the main causes of the impoverishment of the countryside was now removed.

Change in the later middle ages

The later middle ages were a period of depression; they were also a period of change which paved the way for economic recovery. The extent of recovery must not, however, be overemphasised: it seems unlikely that the heights attained in the thirteenth century had again been reached before the end of the middle ages, and population was only just beginning to approach its former levels. It has been argued that there was a general rise in the standard of living; certainly the impressive farm houses and town houses that survive from the fifteenth century in many parts of Europe bear witness to the wealth of certain sections of society. There have also been attempts to show that output per head of the population increased, but it seems highly unlikely that there was any significant rise.

Reorganisation

Despite this there are signs that by the end of the middle ages a more efficient economic structure had been forged during the period of depression. Economic activity seems to have been better spread over Europe. Southern Germany became one of the major industrial regions of Europe, while England and Holland appeared as mercantile powers, eager to seek out new markets. The English efforts in the Baltic and the Mediterranean proved largely abortive, but merchants from Bristol broke into the Iceland trade, while the Dutch nearly wrested control of the Baltic trade from the Hanseatic cities.

The Italians still dominated European trade. Their business houses had branches in most of the important European centres. Italian ties with northern Europe had been tightened by the opening up of the sea route through the Strait of Gibraltar. Merchants and bankers from the northern Italian cities performed the essential task of keeping trade moving and they did much to preserve the economic unity of Europe at a time when there was a danger that it might completely disintegrate.

Within northern Italy international banking and commerce were becoming concentrated in four metropolitan centres: Venice, Genoa, Florence and Milan. Previously a large number of Tuscan and Lombard cities had had European interests. Thus, while the small Tuscan town of Pistoia had in the thirteenth century boasted business houses with international interests, by the fifteenth century it had become little more than a market town with some light industry geared to the Florentine market. Francesco Datini, one of the most successful fourteenth-century business men, came from another small Tuscan town, Prato. He built up his business at Avignon, but when he returned to Tuscany he made Florence, and not Prato, the centre of his affairs.

The rise of metropolitan centres was not just limited to Italy; it was during the later middle ages that London came to dominate the English economy so completely. The result was better defined economic regions and a clearer division of labour between different towns; but it relegated many towns that had formerly enjoyed an international standing to a position of local importance only.

Reconstruction in the countryside

Economic recovery demanded a return of prosperity to the countryside. It is no coincidence that during the fifteenth century northern Italian agriculture was flourishing. It was now much better balanced, less dominated by arable farming. The decline of the urban corn market allowed more diversification of agriculture and this made for greater flexibility. In England there was the beginnings of an enclosure movement. More enterprising farmers escaped the restraints of communal farming, which was still largely given over to corn-production. In many areas open-field farming was also becoming more flexible. The lands of the village were not divided up into any set number of fields, but into as many as were suited to the lie of the land and the type of crops sown.

New crops were introduced. In England beans were being grown on a much larger scale from the early fourteenth century; they not only gave the peasantry a better diet, but could also be used as a winter feed for sheep and cattle. In Lombardy beans were deliberately planted to improve the quality of the soil. More land was given over to industrial crops. Woad, cultivated on an increasingly large scale in Lombardy, was not only employed as a dye-stuff, but also provided valuable fodder for livestock. Mulberry trees were planted in the hilly regions of Lombardy to supply the growing silk industry of Milan.

Perhaps the most important change was the greater emphasis on pastoral farming; this can be considered one of the early pointers to economic recovery. Much of Holland's prosperity seems even then, to have stemmed from its dairy farming. Lombardy became a great cattle raising region, while in England more land was used for sheep farming. From about 1450 villages were being depopulated and their lands enclosed for sheep farming.

These changes pointed the way to more efficient land utilisation, which was taken furthest in Lombardy and Tuscany. There, reclamation of the low-lying marsh lands was continued in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, much being converted into rich water meadows suitable for stock raising. At Pistoia these low-lying lands were under-populated in the thirteenth century, but by the early fifteenth century they were able to support about fifty per cent of the rural population.

In many parts of Europe the prosperity of the countryside increased with the growth of rural industries. The rural cloth industry produced cheap fabrics as an alternative to the expensive materials of the town-based industry which the peasantry could not afford. While its early growth was part of the agricultural depression, in England its rapid development was favoured by the

Far left: another scene of a Turkish bath, popular in medieval Paris.
Left and below: the retailers of foodstuffs had a very important part to play in the early growth of the medieval town. In all but a handful of towns the provisioning trades always remained more important than the industrial crafts. From the late twelfth century the different trades and crafts began to be organised into guilds; these were responsible for protecting the interests of their members, and they laid down regulations for the conduct of business and for the production of goods.
Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

These illustrations depict various aspects of the retail trade.
Above right: butter being weighed. Dairy products became increasingly important in the later middle ages. Much of the prosperity of Holland, Norway, and the Alps came to depend on the dairy industry.
Above left: wine-barrels being tapped.

Wine was exported in huge quantities from Gascony to England. The vinters' were among the most important of the London guilds.
Left: a baker at work.
Far right: a butcher's shop. Miniatures. (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

abundance of wool and by the difficulties of the Flemish industry, so that by the end of the fourteenth century England was one of the largest exporters of cloth in Europe. The rural industry had decided advantages over that carried on in the towns. It did not have to face the same guild restrictions, and was able to profit from the increased mobility of labour in the countryside. The rural industry may also possibly have derived some slight advantage from the increased use of fulling mills.

The success of other rural industries was not as spectacular as that of the English cloth industry. Nevertheless a flourishing linen industry grew up in the Flemish countryside; and in Italy the metal trades were increasingly carried on in the mountains, where there was water and timber in abundance.

The contribution of the towns

The towns played an essential part in the reconstruction of the countryside. Stock raising requires more capital than arable farming, and the towns supplied much of the capital needed, as they did for the industrial crops, which were mostly cultivated within easy reach of a town. It was partly because of shortage of capital that agriculture in France took so long to recover. Increased investment by the towns in land may well have been just a natural reaction to economic depression, but it was to form one of the foundations of the recovery of agriculture.

With the decline of the urban corn market the towns were no longer in a position to overexploit the countryside. Investment was now likely to be more beneficial to agri-

culture. This was certainly the case in Tuscany: perpetual rents in wheat had been a heavy burden on the peasantry, but in the fifteenth century they brought in only a very moderate return on capital. People from the towns began to take a more direct part in Italian agriculture. When the great ecclesiastical estates in Lombardy broke up under the pressure of heavy taxation, much of the land was taken over by speculators from the towns; and they had the necessary capital to effect improvements. At the same time there was a spread of commercial leases of land, under which the owner was commonly expected to provide the lessee with some capital or stock. The increased interest shown by the Italian cities in agriculture is perhaps reflected in the more equitable division of taxation between town and countryside. In Lombardy rural taxation was deliberately reduced in the early fifteenth century.

In the English Midlands cattle rearing was carried on less by farmers than by graziers from the towns. It is noticeable that their standing was rising within the towns. But throughout northern Europe relations between landlord and peasant were perhaps more decisive for the recovery of agriculture than they were in Italy. They were no longer dictated so much by claims of lordship as by supply and demand for land. This shift was very much in the peasantry's favour. Labour services virtually disappeared. Landlords were often forced to provide stock or other capital equipment, while the rents paid by the peasantry were falling sometimes to purely nominal sums. In England these changes are reflected in the rise of a class of prosperous yeoman farmers; this gave a solid base to English agriculture.

A much better balance was being established between town and countryside, which helped the recovery of both. The rural industries are a case in point. The towns provided markets for their products, but did not dominate them. The merchants from the towns were mainly responsible for marketing the products, but they did not control the raw materials, and capital was now dispersed along the various stages of production. Profits seem to have been shared out fairly evenly between town and countryside.

Above: nothing was considered more efficacious in the treating of illness and the use of relics. In the early middle ages these formed a very important item in the trade between the Byzantine Empire and western Europe. After the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204 *huge numbers of relics were dispersed across western Europe.*
Right: this illustration hardly gives a fair impression of medieval shipping. By the later middle ages much larger ships were coming into service; there are reports of ships of nearly 2,000 *tons. The growth in the size of ships is probably connected with the greater volume of trade in bulk goods, particularly grain. Miniatures.*
(Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.)

The dawn of modern economy

The later middle ages were a time of preparation, not a time of fruition; they hold the key to later developments, but it is easy to forget how very backward Europe's economy still was. Agriculture remained its essential base, while the towns derived most of their prosperity from trade. The great companies had not yet begun to specialise in any particular branch of business, but would take on almost anything from international banking to purely local affairs. A capital market hardly existed beyond shares in shipping and mining, for industry had not yet passed beyond the craft stage and its equipment required little capital. Land remained the only real long-term investment.

At the same time the foundations were being laid for renewed commercial expansion. The money market became more flexible with the perfection of the bill of exchange, while the development of double-entry book keeping made for more efficient business organisation. The profit motive was certainly present earlier in the middle ages, but now it was better directed.

The increasingly large role that the state was to have in shaping the economy is also prefigured in the later middle ages. The city was now brought more firmly within the framework of the state. The great Flemish cities lost their independence and passed under the direct control of the dukes of Burgundy. Governments were also forced to borrow more and more heavily, to devise more efficient methods of taxation, and even to devalue the coinage, in order to meet their rising expenditure. The economic foundations of the state were being laid.

The growth of the state in the later middle ages went hand in hand with the emergence of better defined regional economies. London and Paris came to dominate the economies of their respective countries partly because of the role of each as administrative capital. The state was in future to play a large part in re-establishing the much-needed balance between town and countryside.

The expansion of trade during the Middle Ages. The Hanseatic League acquired a virtual monopoly of the Baltic whilst Italians gained the ascendancy in the Mediterranean. Fairs increased the exchange of goods between northern Europe and Italy, and western merchants began to dominate the markets of Levant and eastern Europe, which provided outlets for Flemish cloth.

Chronological Charts

FRANCE AFTER THE TREATY OF BRETIGNY

	France	The war	England
1200			
		Philip Augustus completes the conquest of Normandy	Magna Carta (1215)
	Louis VIII (1223–6)	Henry III defeated at	Henry III (1216–72)
	St Louis (1226–70)	Taillebourg	Henry III captured by the barons (1264)
1270	Death of St Louis at Tunis (1270)		
1300	Philip III 'the Rash' (1270–85)	Treaty of Paris (1286)	Simon de Montfort master of England
	Philip IV 'the Fair' (1285–1314)	French defeat at Courtrai (1303)	Edward I (1272–1307)
	Persecution of the Templars		Edward II (1307–27)
	Charles IV 'the Fair' (1322–8)	Edward III claims the French crown (1328)	Edward III (1327–77)
	Last Capetians of the direct line	Opening of the Hundred Years' War	Organisation of the parliament
	Philip VI of Valois (1328–50)	French naval defeat at Sluys	
	The Black Death	Crécy (1346)	
1350	John II 'the Good' (1350–64)		
	Etienne Marcel	Poitiers: capture of	
	The *Jacquerie*	the French king (1356)	
		Treaty of Brétigny (1360)	Revolt of John of Ghent
	Charles V (1364–80)	Treaty of Avignon (1365)	The Good Parliament (1376)
		Du Guesclin frees France	Richard II (1377–99)
	Charles VI (1380–1422)	Death of Du Guesclin (1380)	Wat Tyler

UNIVERSITIES AND CULTURAL LIFE

	France	Italy	Europe
	The *Chanson de Roland*		St Anselm
1100			
	St Bernard founds Clairvaux		
	Abelard	Saracen style in Sicily	Tristram and Isolde
	Suger's *Life of Louis VI*	Palatine Chapel at	Averroës
	Chrétien de Troyes	Palermo	
	The *Roman de Renart*		John of Salisbury
	Notre Dame cathedral	St Francis of Assisi	Walther von der Vogelweide
1200	in Paris		
	University of Paris		
	Villehardouin's *Chronicles*	University of Padua	Roger Bacon
	Chartres cathedral	St Bonaventure	
	William of Lorris	St Thomas Aquinas	Toledo cathedral
	The *Roman de la Rose*	Siena cathedral	
	Aquinas's *Summa*	Nicola Pisano	Westminster Abbey
	Theologiae	Marco Polo	
	Jean de Meung		Duns Scotus
1300	Rutebeuf	Dante	Meister Eckhart
	Joinville's *Memoirs*	Giotto	
	Jean Buridan		William of Ockham
	Papal palace at Avignon	Petrarch	
	Nicholas Oresme		John Ruysbroeck
	William of Machaut	Boccaccio	
		Brunelleschi	Geoffrey Chaucer
	Froissart's *Chronicles*	Leonardo Bruni	

Further Reading List

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